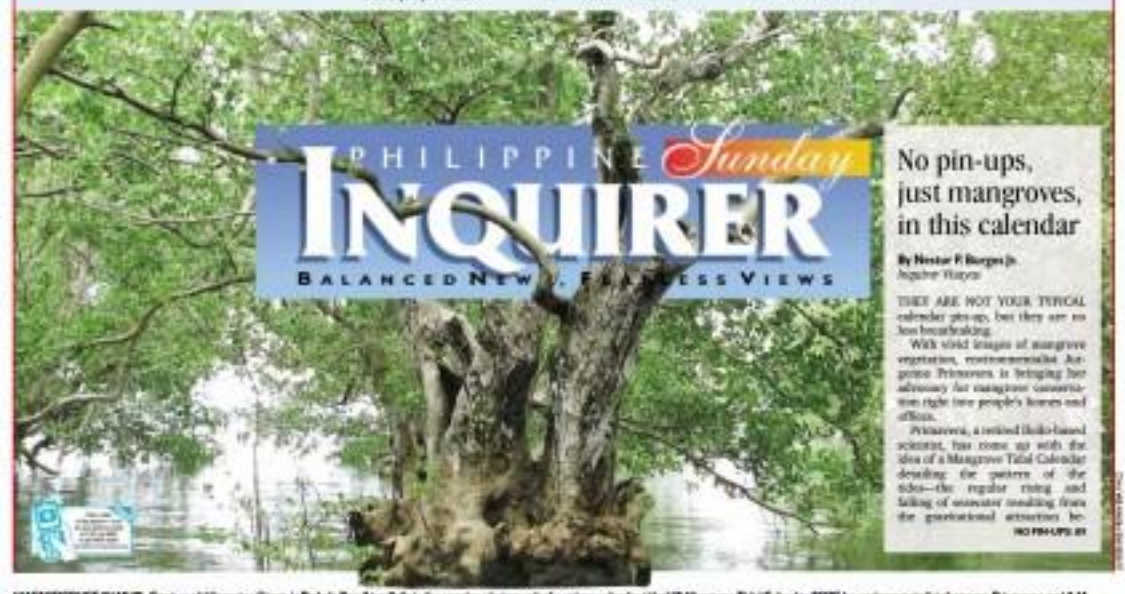
Sunday, April 19, 2009 ★ Vol. 24 / No. 138 www.inquirer.net

PHILIPPINE Sunday INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS



No pin-ups, just mangroves, in this calendar

By Nestor F. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

THEY ARE NOT YOUR TYPICAL calendar pin-ups, but they are no less breathtaking.

With vivid images of mangrove vegetation, environmentalist Jurgenne Primavera is bringing her advocacy for mangrove conservation right into people's homes and offices.

Primavera, a retired Iloilo-based scientist, has come up with the idea of a Mangrove Tidal Calendar detailing the pattern of the tides—the regular rising and falling of seawater resulting from the gravitational attraction be-

NO PIN-UPS /A1

MAGNIFICENCE IN MUD Century old "pagapat" tree in Pandan Bay, Ajuy, Iloilo is the opening photograph of a unique calendar titled "A Mangrove Tidal Calendar 2009" by environmentalists Jurgenne Primavera and A.M. Torrechilla of the Miami-based Pew Fellows Program in Marine Conservation. It aims to raise awareness of the beauty and function of mangroves which for the longest time have been associated with mud and mosquitoes.

Swiss hostage walks free

ANDREAS NOTTER Rescued! Found? Freed? Escaped! AP

But Abus still hold ailing Italian Red Cross worker

By Julie Alipala in Zamboanga City
and Kristine L. Alave in Manila

ZAMBOANGA CITY—SWISS HOSTAGE ANDREAS Notter is free, but it remains unclear whether he was rescued by government troops or released by his Abu Sayyaf captors.

Notter himself said reporters yesterday in Jolo, Sulu, that he was "still a little bit confused how it happened" because "everything happened very quickly."

But Chief Supt. Felimundo Serapio, chief of integrated police operations for Western Mindanao, said Notter was rescued yesterday morning "near an established section" in the town of Indanan by militiamen—the Civilian Emergency Force—and the Indanan police.

"Actually, I don't have a clear picture yet, everything is still garbled," Serapio admitted. What was clear, he said, was that Notter was free "and now with Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan."

Lt. Gen. Nelson Allaga, chief of the Western Mindanao Command, also said Notter was found in Indanan.

"I'm not sure what Sarangay. Whether he was recovered, released or rescued, that I cannot say," Allaga said.

Notter, 37, recalled walking with his captors but not how authorities got hold of him.

"I walked out, and I'm happy to be alive and safe," he said.

Notter said his captors now was the last hostage, Eugenio Vagni, his Italian colleague in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whom he described as "injured."

Vagni, 62, is said to be suffering from hernia and always in pain.

SWISS A6

No place for Panlilio in LP; it's Roxas turf

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.
and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IT'S TOO LATE FOR ERW. MAR Roxas co-installer taking part in a selection process for a standard-bearer in 2010 because he has already made plans for his own stab at the presidency.

This was confirmed by Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca, who said that she and Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio met with Roxas a few days ago to pressure holding a selection process to allow them to field a single presidential candidate next year.

But Roxas told them it was "too late for the idea because he had already organized, he had already committed himself," Padaca said.

With the planned selection of a candidate from among Panlilio, Padaca and Roxas failing out before it could take off, the supporters of the Pampanga governor who want him to run for president in next year's national elections will have to wait a while for him to make a decision.

"Hopefully, we can decide after two more weeks," Panlilio, a Catholic priest who left the priesthood temporarily when he ran for governor, told the Inquirer yesterday after attending a forum organized by the Ate-

NO PLACE /A4

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You will receive, also by MMS, additional information about the image, which may include text, pictures, or even a video.

However, the service—called image recognition—is only available to Globe subscribers.

WANT /A5

DON'T KNOW WHAT HIT HIM Alunary Ted Fallon keeps vigil at the wake of his wife at the Arlington Memorial Chapels on Tuesday. The wake is not open to the public but only to relatives and close friends, according to the Arlington funeral director who says the Fallon family wants to clarify an earlier, contrary advisory. (Stories on Page A6)

Irony of ironies: Erap lectures on corruption

By Erika Sauler

AND THEN SAID IRONY WAS dead.

Although he was ousted in a popular uprising in 2001, convicted of plunder in 2007 and granted executive

IRONY /A2

EX-PRESIDENT Erap hosts Zyrah on the eve of his 72nd birthday which he spends with orphans at the Fundacion de Damas Filipinas Sentimenti House.

From rebel soldier to antidrug combat hero

By Tarra Quismundo

SUDDENLY, OUT OF THE DARK came a hail of bullets.

One of the bullets found their mark in the young officer who was leading the team of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents on a mission to serve an arrest warrant on a drug suspect.

Despite being shot in the chest, PDEA officer Bryan Bulang rolled on to the ground and returned fire, never losing command of his team.

"He just kept firing. He did not want the other agents to see that he was already shot because he was the team leader, he did not want the others to lose their morale. He hid his wound," said Maj. Ray Dello, the plans and operations chief of PDEA.

The situation could very likely have worsened if Bulang had panicked "because we drew our strength from him," said another intelligence officer with the raiding team.

FROM REBEL /A7

• Life is a beach for Tantoco patriarch • When grandma love hits you / SUNDAY LIFESTYLE

• Singing spinster Susan Boyle viewed by 18 million to date / ENTERTAINMENT

• 28 ways to look good, feel great • Turn global warming into heart-warming: 9 ways you can do good • Be a braniac: 26 ways to keep brain cells active • 11 ways to get cultured / SUNDAY INQUIRER MAGAZINE

• Bottled music played by grade school and high school students in Cardona, Rizal / JUNIOR INQUIRER

• Obama seeks 'new beginning' with Cuba • Don't blame GMA for chopper crash, says Palace / NEWS

Second FRONTPAGE

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CHR: Duterte driver could hold key

By Jeffrey Tupas and Ricaborn Arao
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—A CLOSE-IN SECURITY aide of Mayor Rodrigo Duterte could be holding vital information on the spate of summary executions here, Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Chair Leila de Lima said Friday.

De Lima said witnesses had told the CHR, which has been conducting an investigation of the killings allegedly committed by the so-called Davao Death Squad, that former Bureaucrats knew "very important details" on the operations of the DDS.

"I have information from witnesses that he knows something. The information is raw, but if confirmed, it could be explosive," De Lima told reporters on the sidelines of the conference by CHR probe of the killings. She said that was the reason Bureaucrats, a retired policeman, was invited by the body for questioning on Friday.

However, Bureaucrats, who is also Duterte's driver, told the CHR that he only knew of the DDS's alleged operations from media reports.

"My focus is on my work as the security officer and driver of Mayor Duterte," De Lima quoted Bureaucrats's admission that he worked for Duterte was important to the CHR investigation.

Bureaucrats was one of at least 10 people, most of them barangay chiefs, required by the CHR to appear in the second leg of its inquiry on streets by alleged DDS hitmen here. The deaths of more than 800 people—including juvenile delinquents—since 1999 have been attributed to the group.

City police chief Senior Supt. Ramon Apolinario, who was also invited by the CHR to the inquiry, sent a representative, Supt. Antonio Rivera, chief of the city police's investigation division.

De Lima said the CHR wanted to know why the city police's report on killings did not include those who were summarily executed. The report, she said, only contained figures on victims who were either involved in illegal drugs cases, killed in gang wars or were alleged victims of the New People's Army.

In February, Apolinario admitted that the police did not have special categories for these cases, with the killings simply listed as murder incidents.

But Rivera said that those who were under the "unsolved deed" category were "victims of summary executions." Lawyers, however, he stressed, that there were no cases of summary execution in the city, "only killings." He also reiterated that the DDS did not exist.

Killings officials who testified in the inquiry also claimed that the deaths blamed on the DDS were gang-related.

But De Lima said the CHR was not inclined to believe those claims because the killings were carried out by an organized group.

Quit Villar probe, Pimentel tells Lacson

By Leila B. Salaverria

SEN. AQUILINO PIMENTEL yesterday advised Sen. Panfilo Lacson to redefine himself from the ethics probe of Sen. Manuel Villar out of delicadeza (propriety).

Pimentel also said the ethics committee had violated its own rules on handling such complaints and should be reassigned for doing so.

The committee, which is investigating a complaint against Villar for the double funding of a mass project that allegedly benefited his real estate empire, needs to be ethical as well, Pimentel added.

The allegations against Villar were first raised by Lacson.

Majority of the committee's members then signed an undated order directing Villar to answer the allegations against him which were contained in a complaint filed by Sen. Anahy Medigol.

The issuance of the controversial order constituted a violation of the committee's own rules, which require that deliberations on a complaint first be held before it asks the accused to respond, Pimentel said.

"Now, I think Enrile will proclaim in all the more contestable decisions now to dodge the ethics committee," Pimentel said of the Republic to their favorite. "Therefore, I'm appealing to his sense of delicadeza to reconsider his position of chair."

The committee's ruling was described by Villar's allies as a "political ruling." Villar has announced plans to run for president next year. Lacson and Sen. Richard Gordon, who both chaired the committee investigations, are also believed to be eyeing the presidency as well.

Pimentel also said yesterday that he would raise the possibility of withdrawing his ethics panel in the course that he talked on Monday to discuss the actions of the committee.

Tour of Fireflies today

ABOUT 4,000 BICYCLE RIDERS are expected to participate in today's "Tour of the Fireflies" around Metro Manila in demonstrate their advocacy of cycling as a viable alternative form of travel.

According to Eric Vergara, a marshal in today's event, bike lanes by mechanisms will be laid in the cities of Paranaque, Bacoor and Dagupan simultaneously with that in Metro Manila.

"This is part of our advocacy for clean air. We want to promote cycling as a sustainable and alternative means of transportation," Vergara said.

The tour will start at the Timoteo Aguinaldo in Pasay City. Riders will travel along Edsa in Quezon City then head towards till Rizal Avenue in Makati, then Ayala Avenue, before turning into Edsa again and heading back to Timoteo Aguinaldo.

The ride will commence at 7 a.m.

Vergara said some cyclists, as part of established tradition, would be wearing eye-catching colorful costumes to draw the public's attention to the advocacy. Alexis Pages

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GMA not to blame for crash–Palace

By TJ Burgonio

PRESS SECRETARY CESAR MONTANO TESTIMONY: Installed at Iloilo Provincial Capitol, Montano says Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Sr. (left) and Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas (right) are among those who have been appointed to the Iloilo Provincial Peace and Order Council. Montano is the chairman of the council. —PHOTO FROM PRESS SECRETARY CESAR MONTANO'S FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

MALACAÑANG Palace on Saturday said President Arroyo was not to blame for the crash of a military helicopter that killed 14 people, including Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Sr. and Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas.

Presidential Spokesperson Cesar Montano said the President was not aware that Defensor and Treñas were on board the helicopter that crashed in Barangay Tanza, Oton, Iloilo, on Friday.

"The President was not aware that Governor Defensor and Mayor Treñas were on board the helicopter. She was not aware that they were going to be on board the helicopter," Montano said in a radio interview.

Montano said Arroyo was not aware that the helicopter was overloaded.

"The President was not aware that the helicopter was overloaded. She was not aware that the helicopter was not supposed to fly that day," he said.

Montano said Arroyo was not aware that the helicopter was not supposed to fly that day because of bad weather.

"The President was not aware that the helicopter was not supposed to fly that day because of bad weather

Internal tampering bigger threat to automated polls, says expert

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FULL SYSTEM FACES 4 RISKS

Threat, not from computer hackers, but from possible internal tampering with the results of the 2010 elections, an information technology expert warned yesterday.

"The external hacking is not a major issue," IT expert Dan Lagmocam said. "It is the insider posing by an insider that I am worried about because it is possible—it can be done."

Lagmocam, a research fellow of the P11.3-billion poll automation system to be used by the Commission on Elections (Comelec), was reacting to Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano's proposal to put up a P100-million reward for anyone who could successfully hack the system.

The Comelec has been defending its poll automation system, going so far as to challenge hackers to try and penetrate it.

"Let's say nobody is able to hack the system. Does it mean there's no manipulation that can be done? No. It does not prove that it cannot be done from the inside," Lagmocam, who has been the lobbying the quick counts of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) since 1984, said.

Lagmocam added: "What I'm worried about is the public might be deluded into thinking that (the system) is safe because nobody is able to hack it."

In a presentation at a forum organized by the Ateneo Book Foundation yesterday, Lagmocam said that under the setup of the Comelec, voters will fill out machine-readable ballots to be scanned by Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) machines at the precinct level, which will electronically send the results to the municipal, city, provincial and national board of canvassers.

However, he warned that a "malicious code" could be easily downloaded into the PCOS "without anybody being able to detect it." The code can quickly self-destruct after tampering with the results.

He said that safeguard to be used to count the votes would be developed by the foreign company which shall supply the PCOS units.

But Lagmocam warned: "We may be leaving the outcome of our elections in the hands of a foreign company and the Inquirer, according to Gonzalez."

The group has been proposing that the Comelec adopt the Open Election System (OES) which is similar to what Namfrel has been using in its quick counts.

Under the OES, Bilugo can build, test and conduct level counting to manually, but the precinct-level results are encoded at the school level and sent electronically to the board of canvassers.

Lagmocam said the OES would save the government more than P7 billion because only computers, servers and printers will have to be bought. The total cost is about P9 billion. The equipment can be donated to the public school after the elections, he said.

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Fishermen say factories, not poor, polluting bay

By Alcuin Papa

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources (DENR) and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) should go after factories polluting Manila Bay instead of small fishermen and the urban poor, a militant fisherfolk group said yesterday.

It's a bit unfair, the Pamalakaya-Pilipinas ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said Environment Secretary Lito Atienza should stop blaming the urban poor for the sorry state of the bay.

Pamalakaya's national chair Fernando Hicap said Atienza should stop pretending big business and cronies are innocent bystanders and probe the companies polluting the bay and its tributaries.

"Sir, pulling the blame on small and ordinary people and ignoring the real masterminds behind the destruction of the bay," Hicap said.

The militant group said 50 percent of the pollutants entering Manila Bay goes through the Pasig River, and 90 percent comes from industries and commercial establishments located along the country's major river system in the National Capital Region.

Another 15 percent of the pollution that goes into Manila Bay comes from the Bacoor, Imus, Parañaque River systems, the group said, is established by big and small polluting industries.

"The government is blaming everything on a major factor in the degradation of Manila Bay. That's why they are only after the easiest prey," Hicap said.

Hicap also slammed the P100-billion bond which Atienza said was needed by the DENR to clean up the bay, calling it "the biggest money-making scheme of the 21st century."

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Tourism awards set

CEBU GOV. GWEN Garcia, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. Chair Efraim Genuino and Tourism Undersecretary Edwardo Jarque lead this year's recipients of the Tourism Dreamboy Award given out by the Rotary Club of Manila and the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies.

The award nites will be held April 21 at noon at Manila Polo Club in Makati City.

Other awardees are Edu Lopez, Gene Olivo Os, Anne Hoang Ji, Ian Gab Medina, Roberto Halcon and Isabel Tia.

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- Speedreading & Study Skills for Kids 2 | May 25 - 29 | 2 - 5 pm
- Parental Skills Training | May 30 - 31 | 8:30-11:30 am

prosenc
DepEd

Gov't bars seamen from Somali waters

WITH ONE TOO OF THE HILL IN THE hands of Somali pirates, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered labor officials to ban the deployment of Filipino seamen on ships plying the waters off Somalia.

"We are ordering a ban on the deployment of Filipino seamen on ships that pass through the pirate-infested area," Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said over government-run Radyo ng Bayan.

Seventeen Filipino crewmen of a Greek-owned ship were recently freed by pirates after a nearly month-long captivity. But the still leaves 103 Filipinos being held on seven ships in the Gulf of Aden.

Remonde said labor officials also directed shipping agencies to follow the guidance of the International Maritime Bureau to avoid being hijacked.

Those include staying at least 200 nautical miles off Somalia's 3,300-km coastline, and remaining within the designated coordinates of the Maritime Security Patrol Area—a sea lane guarded by a multinational air and naval task force.

"The ships carrying Filipino workers should traverse only along the security corridor, preferably in convoy," he said.

President Arroyo also ordered the Department of National Defense to dispatch a naval liaison officer to the US-led combined task force, a coalition of nine nations with warships in the Gulf of Aden based in Manama, Bahrain.

TJ Burgonio

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, April 19, 2009
2nd Sunday of Easter
Divine Mercy Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 4:32-35

The whole community of believers was one in heart and mind. No one claimed personal ownership of any possessions, but rather they shared all things in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, for all of them were living in exceptional times of grace.

There was an needy person among them, for those who owned land or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of the sale and they laid it at the feet of the apostles who distributed it according to each one's need.

2nd Reading: 1 Jn 5:1-6

All those who believe that Jesus is the messiah, are born of God; if you love the father you also love all those born of him. Now only we know that we love the children of God? If we love God and fulfill his commands, for God's love empowers us to keep his commands. In fact, his commandments are not a burden because all those born of God overcome the world. And the victory which overcomes the world is our faith. Who has overcome the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus Christ was acknowledged through water, but also through blood.

Not only water but water and blood.

And the Spirit, too, witnessed to him for the Spirit is truth.

Gospel: Jn 20:19-31

On the evening of that day, the first day after the Sabbath, the doors were locked where the disciples were, because of fear of the Jews, but Jesus came and stood in their midst. He said to them, "Peace be with you". then he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples kept looking at the Lord and were full of joy.

Again Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." After saying this he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. for those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven, for those whose sins you retain, they are retained."

Thomas, the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he replied, "Until I have seen holes made by the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, the disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, put your hand in my side and put it into my side. Stop doubting and be a believer."

Thomas then said, "You are my Lord and my God." Jesus replied, "You believe because you can see, don't you? Happy are those who have not seen and believe."

There were many other signs that Jesus gave in the presence of his disciples, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; believe and you will have life through his Name.

Commentary:

The Church celebrates this day the tremendous blessing of the Lord's Divine Mercy. No sins could stop the Lord in the earth, and no locked door could block the Lord's mission of extending his mercy to the Church through his beloved apostles.

Can we imagine how the apostles were feeling the day? Their lives had turned upside down within the span of one week, from the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to his agonizing death on the cross just a few days later. They could have done so much better for Jesus, and their hearts were heavily laden with the burden of guilt of leaving Him in His hour of need, but were being able to watch one hour with Him.

Lifted and wound that first Easter evening were all of their sins and sorrows, and all of ours as well, all through the living sign of the Lord, a merry chorus to behold.

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Gonzalez takes cops' side in Failon case

By Aryn de la Cruz and Nancy Carvajal

INFURIATING, SEE; OVERKILL, so.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday came to the defense of the policemen who had arrested the co-host of broadcaster Ted Failon.

"I do not think there was an overkill of force. Maybe the police, because the case involves a celebrity, a popular personality, wanted to solve the case immediately, showing collaboration—overenthusiasm, maybe...but nothing that may be considered undue use of force," Gonzalez said in an interview.

Members of the Quezon City Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (CIDU) investigating the death of Failon's wife, Trinidad Antolin Bong, came under fire over the way they collared and handcuffed Inton of Failon Thursday night at New Era General Hospital.

Police claimed family and friends of Failon (whose real name is Mario Teodoro Failon Bong) were obstructing their investigation. The family insists Failon's wife committed suicide but police are not ruling out homicide or even murder.

"They should all be fired," including CIDU chief Supt. Francis Mateo Mobang, said Sen. Francis Pangilinan in a text message to the Inquirer.

But Gonzalez said the police should not be faulted for the "passionate way" they have been investigating the case. "They are obligated to conduct a thorough investigation, particularly because the crime scene had been cleaned and tampered with, he said.

It was Failon who had to coming, said Gonzalez.

When the crime scene was cleaned, the automatic response was to inquire why he said. "I find it unusual that they cleaned it. You don't have to be an expert to see that it was unusual, and anyone who is saying that this is 'usual' is crying in vain[illegible] minds."

Police maintained that the businessman-actor Trinidad allegedly committed suicide before noon on Wednesday had been stabbed close before they arrived after 4 p.m.

Gonzalez said he was confident that even if the suspected crime scene had been cleaned, forensic experts would still be able to reconstruct what happened inside the Failon residence.

This was the reason, Gonzalez said, the National Bureau of Investigation was diverted to conduct a parallel investigation.

Of course, everyone is interested to know what really happened... outside or not. The people have to know ... This is not a private matter, especially given the circumstances surrounding this one," Gonzalez said.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde yesterday scoffed at insinuations aired in media that Malacañang had a hand in the police's rude treatment of Failon and his family.

"Those are irresponsible, groundsmelling, political statements," Remonde said over government-run Radyo ng Bayan. "We ask the police to do their job... and to do it well, with the highest regard for rules and regulations," he said.

Where are the clothes?

At a press conference at Camp Karingal yesterday, Interior Supt. Elmo San Diego appealed to Failon's family and relatives to help police gather more evidence.

"We appeal to the Bong and Antolin families, to the house help, drivers and to all the friends of the deceased to come forth and assist the police in finding the answers to the most important question: What really happened that led to the death of Trinidad Bong?" said San Diego, the director-designate of the Quezon City Police District.

He said that up to now, the family had not given them the clothes worn by the victim when she was shot.

The clothes, he said, are important to the investigation because it would show if she fired a gun.

Residue harder to remove

The victim, Failon and the household staff all tested negative for powder burns in paraffin tests.

San Diego explained that powder residue on clothes, unlike the hands, was harder to remove.

Failon's bloodied clothes were being examined by forensic experts, said San Diego, who added that henceforth he would be the sole spokesperson of the QCPD on the case.

San Diego said the bullet's trajectory and other ballistic that may be gleaned from the autopsy would be important.

"We will base the next step of the investigation on the results of the trajectory test and autopsy," he said.

The forensic results are due next week. Circulating rumors about the results of those tests, he said, are baseless.

He added that in the event a second party would contradict police crime lab's findings, "we are open to a third party of experts to conduct an investigation to finally close the case."

The NBI, on the other hand, said yesterday it was still in its reported changes in the behavior of Failon's wife prior to the incident.

In a phone interview, Special Task Force Chief Atty. Dabuplenan said they would ask friends of Failon's wife to help them in their probe. In their interviews, friends Jay Tan and Nadia Montenegro talked about Trinidad's state of mind before the incident.

The NBI said it would issue Failon clear for the moment.

Failon appealed for privacy while the family grieved. He asked people to omit sending flowers and just make contributions to the ABS-CBN Foundation. With reports from Michael Lim Ubay, Cynthia D. Balana, Tarra Quismorio, Aella M. Sarcilla, Erika Sauler and TJ Burgonio

Fans, some kin not allowed in wake

By Jake M. Ramilo

FERNANDO GLABA, 88, arrived early at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Arlington Memorial Chapels in Quezon City to pay his last respects to Trinidad Bong, wife of news anchor Ted Failon.

He thought he could catch a glimpse of his idol upon hearing that Bong's wake would be open to the public on Saturday but he was in for a big disappointment.

After being told that only relatives and close friends could enter the chapel, Glaba shrugged and stepped outside to light a cigarette.

"I was able to talk to him once more than 10 years ago, but I doubt he would remember me," Aloba said of Failon. "He was not yet an anchor then."

Aloba, who claimed to be a former talent of ABS-CBN, said he merely wanted to see Failon again and extend his condolences.

He soon left, like other people who didn't know the Failons well but still wished to attend the wake.

The management of Arlington yesterday clarified that only relatives and close friends of the Bongs would be allowed to visit the Sahara 1 and 2 chapels where Trinidad's body lies.

"They wanted to clarify that the viewing will be only for relatives and friends, and that there will be no public viewing," funeral director Cherrie Villarino told the Inquirer.

Bong died Thursday night at the New Era General Hospital after sustaining a gunshot wound in the head.

Police probers have yet to determine if she shooting was a suicide as declared by the Bongs or if it was foul play.

Teachers Jocelyn Ilac, 55, and Rhowenne Cabua, 32, arrived at Arlington as self-professed "relatives" of the actress anchor.

"We just wanted to offer our condolences. We believe she will overcome this trial," Ilac said in Filipino.

For her part, Cabua said the incident was avoidable tragedy.

Other fans of Failon also tried to line up along vain relatives entering the chapel, but were halted by guards stationed there.

A 71-year-old resident, Benito Hapa, claimed to be a distant relative of the Arnedos, Trini's family.

"We never met Ted but still we wanted like to offer our sympathy," he said as he clutched a floral piece.

But after being refused entry, she posted and muttered as she walked away.

In the chapel, Failon was dad in a black shirt and sat in the middle of the first row, while his eldest daughter Raya, wearing a black dress, sobbed at times in and out of the chapel.

The funeral rites are 12-year-old Kristleen were the chapel early in the afternoon, looking somber and composed like her sister.

Also seen yesterday were former Quezon City Mayor Imee Marcos and Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim. With a report from Gaby Baroguillas

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Ms. JOANA Q. BILONGILOT

for passing the 2008 Bar Exams

From: Lolo Malong, Junior Bilongilot and Family

I'm not crazy, says PAO's Acosta

By Nikko Dizon

SHE BELIEVES SHE WAS LURED BY AN Inquirer headline which quoted Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez as calling her "crazy" for helping broadcast journalist Ted Failon who is under investigation for his wife's shooting.

But Persida Acosta, chief of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), said she would not be filing a case against the Inquirer and other publications that carried the Gonzalez quote because she was a "forgiving person."

She also appeared to subscribe her boss, Gonzalez, saying she hasn't had her explained that he did not call her crazy.

But Acosta said the publications should correct the story to save the image and reputation of her office.

"I am appealing to the Inquirer to please correctly that because the whole world read that the chief public attorney is crazy," Acosta said separate at the wake of Failon's wife, Trinidad, at Arlington Memorial Chapels in Quezon City last Friday.

Acosta said her two children were deeply affected by television reports citing the quote from Gonzalez.

"I am not crazy. I am not losing my mind... performing one's duties is not being crazy," she said.

In yesterday's issue of the Inquirer, Gonzalez clarified that he did not call Acosta crazy. What was crazy he said was her going over the wall of Failon because this was not in the PAO's mandate.

Gonzalez sent a memo to Acosta after she was seen on television on April 10 leaving Failon during a police investigation and even defending the broadcaster on the air.

But Acosta countered with her own memo, refuting Gonzalez's claim that her involvement in the Failon case was justified.

She reiterated that the assistance she extended to Failon and his driver, Pacifico Apostol, was within the PAO's "statutorily activities that included limited services" to people in urgent need of legal assistance.

"If I hadn't responded, they would be criticizing me by now," she said.

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Swiss hostage walks free

From page A1

"Everything must be done to release him as soon as possible," Nestor told reporters.

He added: "Prayers helped me, and I think everybody and the security forces.

"Thank you for the sacrifices."

Shielded from public

The ICRC shielded Nestor from public scrutiny.

After making a brief statement to Jolo, he was escorted out of the Sulu provincial capitol by ICRC personnel and brought to the forward base of the UN Joint Special Operations Task Force Forward at Camp Teodulfo Bautista in Barangay Sasa first.

From there, he was flown to Zamboanga City in a private helicopter that landed at the Quezon helipad at the Edwin Andrews Air Base.

At 4 p.m., Nestor and some ICRC personnel took a private plane to an undisclosed destination.

The ICRC was informed by Philippine authorities that Nestor was free at around 8 a.m. yesterday (Manila time).

Alain Aeschlimann, the head of the ICRC sub-Sahelic delegation, said Nestor was "having lunch(s) after" by his colleagues.

"He is safe, well and happy that he will soon be back with his family. However, his thoughts are with Eugenio Vagni, with whom he shared the kidnapping ordeal and who is not yet free," Aeschlimann said in a statement.

Nestor is to be flown to Manila for a debriefing and further tests, according to Gwen Pang, deputy secretary general of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC).

"After that, it will be decided if he will leave for Switzerland," she said. "He also wants to see his loved ones." Nestor asked for nothing except for Vagni's release when he met with authorities yesterday morning, Pang said.

He said the last time he saw Vagni was on Friday as the guards had kept them separated, Pang said.

Nestor's safe release is "a concern" of the ICRC headquarter, Pang said.

Aeschlimann reiterated this concern: "We are, of course, very relieved that Andreas will soon be back in the arms of his loved ones. But we remain very concerned about Eugenio's safety, and we call on the abductors to let him go safely, immediately and unconditionally."

Arevalo's story

Lt. Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesperson of the Task Force ZSP, said it was around 5:30 a.m. yesterday when Nestor was recovered by members of the Sulu police and the Civilian Emergency Force in the vicinity of Barangay Kanlas and Mangkilay in Indanan, which is a few minutes away from Jolo.

He said the civilian volunteers, who recognized Nestor, immediately brought him to Governor Tan's house.

Tan said that earlier, Nestor's captors learned of the presence of soldiers around their camp, so they moved their captive to safety. He said that since the soldiers were in a vantage position, the Abu Sayyaf decided to evade them.

But the Abu Sayyaf stumbled on a group of police and militiamen, and fled to another direction, Tan said.

During the rush, Tan said, Nestor was able to run to the direction of the police and the military.

Vagni, Vagni and Filipino engineer Mary Jean Lacaba were snatched on Jan. 15 just after inspecting a water sanitation project at the provincial jail in Jolo.

Lacaba, 44, was freed on April 3, two days after the Abu Sayyaf threatened to behead one of the hostages if government troops did not pull out of Jolo.

Midnight release

But according to a leader of the civilian volunteers who said he was one of those who collected Nestor, the Swiss national was released by the Abu Sayyaf in Barangay Lipason in Patikul town close to midnight on Friday.

The volunteers initially thought the men they had met Wagni, said the source, who asked not to be named for lack of authority to speak on the matter.

"It was near midnight. We were ambushed toward Patikul. We thought there was an operation. When we got there, a group of armed men met us and turned over a foreigner to us. We did not know who the armed men were," the source said on the phone.

He said the foreigner carried a bag that contained his belongings.

"We were helping him because he had difficulty walking even with a cane. We thought he was Eugen," the source said.

He was only yesterday morning that he realized that the foreigner was Nestor, the source said.

Asked whether Nestor was rescued, as Senapin had claimed, the source said the foreigner was released and that no rescue occurred between his group and that of the armed men.

Arevalo, who had earlier professed surprise at Nestor's release, said the calibrated military pressure had helped secure the latter's freedom.

He said Nestor had told the military that the pressure kept the bandits on their toes, and that they could only move around a constricted area of about 20-30 kilometers a day.

"This welcome development manifests the enduring commitment of the security forces to give primacy to the life and safety of the kidnap victims by allowing negotiations for their release and keeping the military or rescue operations the final option," Arevalo said.

Advocacy undimmed

Nestor's ordeal in the jungles of Sulu has not extinguished his concern for the people of the province.

Just hours after Nestor found himself free, he and the ICRC staff were already discussing humanitarian projects in Western Mindanao, Pang said.

"He was very concerned about the people in the area where he had been working. He told the doctors who checked up on him [yesterday] morning of his plans for water sanitation projects in Jolo," Pang said.

Nestor, a business graduate who holds a postgraduate degree in history, was a history professor and had extensive experience in aid organizations before joining the ICRC full time.

For his first assignment in the ICRC, Nestor was posted in a Central African Republic town of Bangui, which borders Sudan.

Then in 2007, he was transferred to the Philippines, where he serves as director of the regional mission based in Zamboanga City.

As head of the ICRC suboffice in Western Mindanao, Nestor was mainly focused on helping victims of armed conflict, rebel groups and the military.

He has helped reunite families separated by the war and implemented livelihood, water and sanitation projects in the region.

He also worked for the protection of detained persons and the dissemination of information on international humanitarian law.

Pang, who had worked with Nestor on Red Cross projects in Western Mindanao and who was with him in Sulu yesterday morning, said he was "very smart" and full of "service" lifestyle.

"He's finding it difficult to recall what happened. He's confused," Pang observed.

'Nonviolent mechanisms'

Expressing relief that Nestor was now free, Gen. Alexander Yano, the Armed Forces chief of staff, said nonviolent measures were being explored for Vagni's release.

"The safe recovery of Nestor is a relief to all government agencies working for the safe release of the ICRC workers and to proof of their unrelenting efforts," Yano said in a statement.

"All nonviolent mechanisms are being exhausted to ensure that this release of Vagni will happen in the soonest possible time. This is a product of interagency effort to utilize nonviolent sources of action in ensuring the safe release of the victims," he said.

Yano also said the military may not release sensitive details about how the captives walked free to avoid compromising efforts for Vagni's release.

As careful in his words, Philippine National Police Director General Jesus Versoza said there was "a live fight" between the bandits and government troops on Friday night.

He did not elaborate beyond saying that the PNP, which recently sent a reinforcement of more than 180 elite combat forces, was maintaining the security cordon in Sulu "also to protect the civilian population."

Asked whether the situation was expected to change after Nestor's rescue, Versoza told the business: "The two hostages, the fruit the movement of the troops. And the negotiations may also be easier now." With a report from Tarra Quismorio

SHELTER: The former hostage, Andreas Nestor is protected in the press briefly as jole makes his/her's/hers to undisclosed destinations. He has been escorted from public servants by Philippine Red Cross Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Rodrigo Duterte, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan. Behind are some of Nestor's colleagues at the International Committee of the Red Cross. AFP/MALACAÑANG PHOTO BUREAU

'Very good news'

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE STATE-run Radyo ng Bayan, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said Nestor's freedom was "very good news not only for Swiss's family, friends or countrymen but (also for) everyone else who prayed for his safety and for our military, police and government officials who worked tirelessly for his release."

"We reiterate our call to the kidnappers to release the last hostage, and we commend the local crisis management committee...the police, military, the citizens and all those who in one way or the other have helped in the rescue of Mr. Nestor," Remonde said.

He said the government would continue to work for Vagni's "safe release." TJ Burgonio

This time, Dick's the odd man out

By Michael Lim Ubac

AS FAR AS THE FREEDOM OF information is concerned, Sen. Richard "Dick" Gordon is the odd man out.

But Gordon, who chairs the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), yesterday said everyone in the organization was happy that Nestor was now free.

"I don't care. As long as we get back the hostages alive, I'm happy," the senator said, commending the military and police and even former Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro for the welcome development.

"I hope we have good news always," he said.

Gordon refused to be interviewed early yesterday because he did not want to comment on Nestor's case. He was obviously sad privy to the negotiation for Nestor's release.

But he eventually yielded to the insistence of reporters covering him in the Senate, and agreed to an interview with dwEd news anchor Cely Bueno late afternoon.

Wake-up call

Gordon, who was instrumental in the release of Filipino hostage Mary Jean Lacaba on April 3, said Nestor that he was overwhelmed with joy upon learning that Nestor was "alive and well."

"Whatever you believe the media [informed] me about it? They woke me up at 5 a.m. [yesterday]. I immediately got up and made calls," he recalled.

Gordon said he thought it was the Italian hostage Eugenio Vagni who had been freed because the latter was "seriously" ill.

When he asked ICRC officials in Manila about it, he discovered that they were also out of the loop.

He he started calling officials in Sulu and Zamboanga City, and ordered PNRC deputy secretary general Gwen Pang to fly to Zamboanga.

Handshake

Gordon finally got hold of Nestor on the phone at about 2 p.m., when he was officially turned over to Pang.

He said that at point time, Nestor was on his way in an undisclosed place in Sulu to Manila, and that it was best that the former hostage be kept from the media in the meantime to enable go-critical rest/debriefing.

"We talked on the phone. He asked when we are meet, saying he was looking forward to meeting me," said Gordon, who replied that they could meet in a couple of days.

The senator said he only went out of a handshake with Nestor.

"I have no reason to torture him. I only want to shake his hand, thank him ... recognize his sacrifice," Gordon said, explaining that Red Cross workers were "renowned" around the world and earn enough to earn aid workers.

Hunch

Gordon said he had a hunch that one of the two remaining hostages would be freed soon after talking with Jacob leader Albader Parad in negotiations days ago.

Although the senator is not the official government negotiator, Parad calls him from time to time.

But Gordon said he did not take part in the negotiations in order to preserve the neutrality recognized role of the Red Cross, which is a humanitarian movement that does not take sides in any conflict.

"I don't care about the negotiations," he said.

Gordon said he told Nestor that he had expected Vagni to be freed first.

"He seemed also a little baffled [why Nestor was released ahead of Vagni]," he said, adding:

"Don't ask me how [Nestor] was fetched from the jungles of Jolo. I don't know ... I might be reprimanded [by the military] if I tell a different version."

Irony of ironies: Erap lectures

From page A1

chemistry a month later, former President Joseph Estrada told a class of graduating students to "conquer widespread corruption and cheating in society."

Estrada was the guest speaker during the 41st commencement exercises of the Dasmariñas ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM) on Friday.

In his speech, he joked that in his six years in obscurity (civil, four years in high school and three years in college), "that ang pagkakaiba ng politicians, ngayon ako naman ang nagkaiba sa akin (I listened to my politicians, sana the professors listen to me)."

Perfect speaker

PLM president and United Opposition spokesperson Isko Tantoco said Estrada, although a college dropout, was the "perfect" graduation speaker because he was an example of a leader.

Estrada, who had blamed at once again accusing his president, never-let-me-up with a number of unnamed candidates that included Tantoco.

In his speech, the former President hit the Arroyo administration, saying corruption scandals had taken a toll on the country's economy along with the global financial crisis.

Estrada, who came 72 inches was ousted from Malacañang in 2001 by Edsa II, paving the way for then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo to assume the presidency.

He is now pardoned Estrada a month after the Sandiganbayan convicted him of plunder in 2007.

Series of scandals

"Thanks for the pain go to the pockets of corrupt government officials under this administration," Estrada said, referring to the $329-million National Broadband Network scandal, the $2-million extortion case of former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

"Nagbibirap na nga ang mga mahihirap, sinamantalahan pa (The farmers are already poor, yet this administration continues to steal from them)," he added.

"To the present crisis, government is not the solution to the problem because the government is the problem," he said, quoting his "idol" former US President Ronald Reagan.

Estrada also asked graduates to continue learning and to study why the country remained poor despite alleged programs for poverty alleviation.

"Bakit hindi umunlad ang bansa kahit naturalidad-ang mga Pilipino? (Why is the country not moving forward when Filipinos are smart?)," he said.

English this way

Estrada noted: "Noong mga ang mga ito, wala naman kasi sa Inglesan yan (They speak English this way [in the provinces] because there is no Inglesan)."

He also urged graduates to speak in a convincing good and a fellowed.

From his seventy business, Bong Revilla, mentor a seventy [PHP70] loan to 70 farmers in his province from production grant loan PHP3 to per sack. During pest control, he helped 70 farmers of tension fruit can go to high to 25 sacks weekly with an income of PHP5,000.

Bong Revilla's successes shows that determination and dedication can make a difference, a matter life. His experience is one of the success stories of how the DAR has helped improve the lives of its beneficiaries. The DAR is a member of the 10-agency Anti-Hunger Task Force created by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to implement antipoverty and anti-hunger measures in partnership with the Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Program Participants.

DAR helps South Cotabato farmer achieve success

Rodrigo Arangel, a farmer of Barangay Tinagacan, Polomolok, South Cotabato, has found out that agriculture is his real calling. Being a only child, he was forced to quit schooling from elementary school at 12 years old. Being farmer at 17 years old, being farmer at 30 years old, he still [illegible] has one is aimed at high school not to choose to keep his parents run the farm and [illegible] equipment and [illegible] machineries.

Being the breadwinner and farm work part-off when the farm not his was living was transferred his name through [illegible] ownership offer's land.

For a start, Being Nanay focused on corn production and came that time, however, the income from corn production was not sufficient to support his family. Unable a relatives and artisans, there were better [illegible] to decided a diversify, said Being Nanay in an interview and [illegible].

He planted vegetables and bananas while tending some area for corn. Being Nanay's income from the diversified more grafted for from the vermicast dumpsite, [illegible] manufactured.

Moreover, he engaged in poultry raising by acquiring chickens from the livelihood program of the Capital Church-[illegible] by [illegible] grants, and Raising Ducks.

His efforts were rewarded as his raising and poultry businesses were able to provide for his family's daily expenses, to present, Being Nanay's full income include PE emergency, 80 percent, 80 carpenters, 80 farmers, 80 carpenters, and 80 laborers.

With his determination and success, Being Nanay was able to [illegible] a small offer access to several agri-development trainings organized by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Agriculture. Now that the DAR has awarded the land to him, Being Nanay is more motivated and more productive. He plans to expand his livestock production by raising different breeds of animals. He also plans to build a swimming pool and a fishpond.

From his monthly business, Being Nanay earns a monthly income of PHP70,000. He is the farmer from production grant loan PHP3 to per sack. During pest control, he helped 70 farmers of tension fruit can go to high to 25 sacks weekly with an income of PHP5,000.

Being Nanay's successes shows that determination and dedication can make a difference, a matter life. His experience is one of the success stories of how the DAR has helped improve the lives of its beneficiaries. The DAR is a member of the 10-agency Anti-Hunger Task Force created by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to implement anti-poverty and anti-hunger measures in partnership with the Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Program Participants.

No place for Panlilio in LP

By [illegible] A1

ing Dovie Nombalarios in Quezon City.

LP member

Padaca said Panlilio, along with like-minded officials, regarded the ruling party-mance movement's Raya Makati that Padaca is also a member of the Liberal Party, which considers Roxas its presidential contender in 2010.

"If in case Senator Roxas is not selected [in the proposed process], he cannot just easily give up his candidacy because he will also have to consider other people," Padaca said.

The Isabela governor said she and her colleagues initiated the meeting with Roxas "so we don't have to decide ourselves" for the 2010 presidential election.

Padaca said she also believed in the integrity of the Liberal Party.

"I wanted to see my identities with prog-ressives," she said, adding:

"It cannot be denied that Senator Roxas already has his preparations; he has the funds, the machinery and the political pa-ty."

Asked to comment on being asked to be Panlilio's running mate, Padaca expressed apprehension, saying she felt "too small" for a big position.

"But if I still see the chance of our people, I will be very selfish if I refuse and just rest in my comfort zone," she said.

The group has started an online petition to urge Padaca to run for president.

Ready for change

In a presentation during the forum, businessman Guillermo Luz, the vice chair of the Movement for Good Governance, said that aside from more reform-oriented voters, the country needed "more reform-minded candidates running for office at all levels of the government."

But Padaca said good candidates alone could not win the elections and needed the support of voters who were ready for change.

Panlilio said that while he was still undergoing a "discernment process," he was "open for a national office."

He quickly added, however, that he was also open to "a person who will inspire our people to vote and that person may not necessarily be me."

Panlilio said he was willing to "sacrifice" for the good of the country.

"I believe that at this point, our country needs the best from us, and we should be ready to sacrifice and give up everything for [for] unity," Panlilio said.

"To me, it would mean my priesthood," he said.

Original deal

At a news forum last month of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Panlilio also said he was willing to leave the priesthood should he decide to run for president.

But Panlilio's supporters expect him to remain in the priesthood, as he promised after he was elected into office three years ago.

San Fernando Auxiliary Bishop Pablo Virgilio David said this was the "original deal" with Panlilio back in 2007, when he won by a close margin of about 1,000 votes over erstwhile leading candidate Lito Flordeliz and ex-governor Mark Lapid.

David said he had a meeting with Panlilio during the Holy Week to remind the latter of his promise.

"He fully understood our concerns because the original deal was after three years as governor, he will eventually return to his priestly ministry," David said in comments printed in the CBCP news website.

David said that with many of Panlilio's opponents encouraging him to run for the presidency in 2010, the governor would have to choose between leaving the priesthood for good to pursue his political career and returning to the priesthood as he had originally intended.

The bishop said the meeting with Panlilio was a private one, "but it was he who brought it out to the media, so I am now forming such a meeting really task plans."

Panlilio's current and former superiors, San Fernando Archbishop Paciano Aniceto and Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, respectively, have frowned on Panlilio's apparent interest in running for president.

Church law prohibits priests from having a political career, they pointed out.

Want more of PDI photos? Send us an MMS at 2373

By [illegible] A1

"We want to provide our readers more exciting ways to enjoy the Inquirer so we are making a special service in partnership with Globe Telecom Inc.," said assistant vice president and marketing director Joel Saludades.

"We are adding value to our news delivery in an innovative manner," she added.

The Inquirer is the first newspaper company in the country to introduce the service.

"It is a different way of communicating with Inquirer readers," said head of Globe cable Harvey Libarnes.

Richer reading

Libarnes said the technology, spearheaded by Globe, would provide readers "a richer newspaper reading experience." It would also target young people, who prefer their information delivered using innovative media.

"When you read a newspaper, the content is static," he said. "With this service, you can supplement what you are reading with more points of interaction."

Inquirer marketing officer Chito Sta. Maria said Globe subscribers would receive on their cell phones the same caption of information the Inquirer has been known for.

On top of that, it's going to be interactive and multimedia, he said.

New format

Globe first presented the technology to the Inquirer three months ago.

The telecom company has been testing image recognition in various formats. It has even used it in one of its promos where subscribers are asked to send an MMS of Globe's logo from posters and ads to get free ringtones.

"We want to educate the market on how we can use new technologies or enrich our consumer experience," Libarnes said. "The technology is ready; the question is, if the market is ready."

He said Globe chose to work with the Inquirer because of its wide reach and "we believe the Inquirer is one of the most proactive newspapers."

Prizes to lucky texters

"We are moving away from a static newspaper and into a more interactive experience and the Inquirer management immediately saw the potential," Libarnes added.

To encourage Inquirer readers who are Globe subscribers to try the service, it will be offered free starting today.

Globe will also give out prizes to lucky texters. For complete details, readers can log on to Globe.ph or the Inquirer.net. Jobert C. Tinsay Jr.

No pin-ups, just mangroves, in this calendar

By [illegible] A1

leaves the earth, sun and moon.

She says the calendar will help scientists, especially fisheries and aquaculture researchers, conducting field research to accurately determine tidal patterns.

But while most calendars only indicate when low and high tides can be expected, the Mangrove Tidal Calendar also details the tide levels for a particular time.

Visual delight

But more than a technical aid, the calendar is a visual delight with full-page photographs of mangroves around Penny Island taken by Primavera and her colleague, Ana Torres-Isla.

A project of the University of Miami-based Pew Different Program in Marine Conservation, the publication is part of a campaign to raise public awareness about mangroves and the importance of conserving them.

Primavera, a Pew fellow, was one of those cited last year by Time magazine as "Heroes of the Environment," along with activists, scientists, celebrities, innovators and financiers all over the world, for her contribution to environmental protection.

The calendar opens with an imposing picture of a century-old "pagsapat" tree (*Sonneratia alba*) in the Dulada Bay off Ajuy town, Iloilo.

Primavera is highlighted by a collage of photographs depicting the many uses of and products derived from mangroves.

The notes accompanying the images explain why mangroves—the shrubs and trees forming dense thickets and low forests in coastal mudflats, marshes and estuaries—are in decline. They are being destroyed because of over-exploitation and conversion to aquaculture, croplands and salt beds, according to the calendar.

Sea of green

One of the more powerful scenes can be found in the May portion of the calendar, in which a sea of green blankets the entire page, the image being that of an abundant growth of "bungalon" or "apiapi" (*Avicennia marina*) in the town of Tungaban in Ajuy province.

Other photographs show children learning about or building man-mangrove swamps.

Primavera says the aim of the calendar project is to spread awareness about mangroves, which is "still low despite advances."

The Pew Fellows Programs in Marine Conservation has designed a pilot module on basic mangrove appreciation and conservation for elementary and high school students.

Complimentary copies

The calendar had an initial print run of 500, which were given away as complimentary copies to scientists, marine conservationists and nongovernment organizations. More copies will be printed if there is enough interest in it, says Primavera.

Interested users can also assist people to appreciate the beauty of mangroves.

"Most people still associate mangroves with mud and mosquitoes and we are working hard to correct that perception," she says.

Inquiries about the calendar may be e-mailed to jacquino.primavera@tnl.org or at (033.3384430.

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From rebel soldier to antidrug combat hero

By [illegible] A1

Marvin Quilinderino

Convicted, pardoned

Baluang, 29, a former Navy ratings, is one of the convicted rebel soldiers that PDEA Director General Dionisio Santiago said owed to the agency after they were disarmed from the Armed Forces and pardoned by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Baluang, a 2001 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, joined the group of junior officers who styled themselves as the Magdalo group and took over the Oakwood Premier hotel at the Ayala Center during the failed coup of July 2003, also known as the Oakwood mutiny.

He was with the initial group of 28 commissioned rebel officers who, after their pardon and release last December, reinvented themselves as "revolutionary anti-illegal drugs agents" and saw action in the PDEA's fight against illegal drug syndicates.

The bayonet-marked Baluang by text on Friday, but the PDEA intelligence officer, who is recuperating in a Davao City hospital, declined to be interviewed as he found it difficult to speak because of his chest wound.

One casualty

But his superiors and fellow agents at PDEA were happy to recount how Baluang held the ground for his team despite being gravely wounded during that dawn ambush by an estimated 30 heavily armed men in Barangay Sultan Bankaw, last Monday.

PDEA lost one agent, intelligence officer Pablo Jose Solis, and an asset identified only as "Thor" in the attack.

The team of 17 agents, on board two service vehicles, were in Barangay to serve an arrest warrant on Hadi Hasipa Abdula, a drug suspect. Baluang, Solis and Thor were in the lead vehicle.

According to Quilinderino, they had just entered the street and were about to pull up near the house of Hadi when they were greeted by a shower of bullets.

"Just as we were about to park, there was gunshots, there was a volley of gunfire. I saw Sir Baluang crawling, rolling. I heard Agent Solis shout that he was hit," Quilinderino recalled.

Relentless gunfire

Under relentless gunfire, Baluang kept firing at the gunmen who had positioned themselves behind mounds of sand, trees and houses, and subdued M16, M14 and M1 Garand rifles.

"Sir [Baluang] called me to ask for reinforcements but I never noticed in his voice that there was something wrong. I didn't know that he was already wounded and he never mentioned it," said Mukhtar Mukaoma, PDEA director in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

An ace firefighter remembered, a fellow agent noticed that their team leader was grimacing in pain. Only then did one of the agents take Baluang's M14.

"He was the commander. He was the most experienced. Most of the agents with him had never experienced an engagement. It might have been worse if he had pulled out," said Deribo.

26-minute firefight

Reinforcements soon arrived, prompting the gunmen to beat a retreat. The exchange of gunfire lasted about 20 minutes, said Quilinderino.

Some of the agents were sure they had hit some of the gunmen but no trace of the wounded could be found when the PDEA checked among the hospitals near the site of the encounter.

Tipped off

PDEA officials believe the gunmen, members of drug syndicates operating in the area, had been tipped off that the agency's operatives were on their way to serve one of their members.

Baluang and another injured officer, Mark Anthony Viray, were airlifted to a Davao City hospital after the gunbattle.

"The example of agent Baluang shows that we should not retaliate. Some who have committed mistakes in the past become they see a big help to us," said Deribo.

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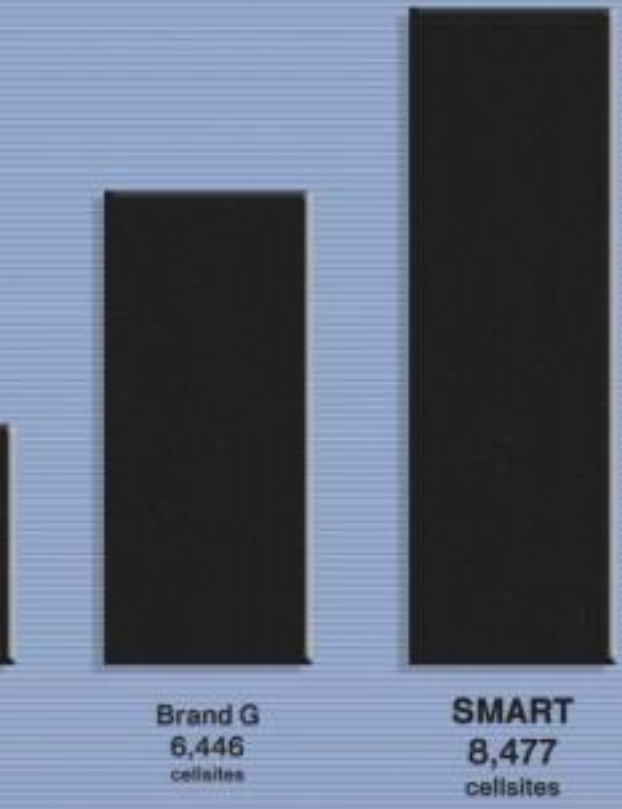

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OPINION

Hypocrisy

EDITORIAL

MANUEL VILLAR JR. JOINS THE MIXED RANKS of senatorial predecessors Ramon Diokno, Jose Avelino and Sergio Osmeña Jr. who had to face colleagues to answer charges that they had violated laws and government ethics to an extent that warranted suspension or expulsion from Congress.

The first, Diokno, was a case of out-and-out partisan persecution: in 1948, 16 senators Diokno, Jose Vera and Jose Romero were denied their seats on the basis of their allegedly committing "fraud and terrorism."

The second is, perhaps, the more interesting—affecting as it did, a former Senate president, too. On Feb. 12, 1949, President Elpidio Quirino advised Senate President Avelino to resign because of scandals concerning his Senate and Liberal Party presidencies. This was after an eavesdropping reporter named Celso Cabreira claimed to have heard Avelino indignantly reply "What are we in power for?"

A case of legislative sleight-of-hand—rather reminiscent of the manner by which Villar, then the Speaker of the House of Representatives, accomplished the transmittal of impeachment charges against Joseph Estrada to the Senate—toppled Avelino on Feb. 21, 1949. Howdy demonstrations marred the opening of the Senate's session, in which an ouster of Avelino was expected. Avelino tried to quell silence. When what was either a gun or a firecracker went off, Avelino abandoned the convenor and, with supportive senators, fled the scene.

The remaining 12-man camp of pro-Quirino senators promptly ousted Avelino and replaced him with Mariano Jesus Cuenco as Senate president. Their action was upheld by the Supreme Court and was followed in March 1949 by Avelino's suspension from the Senate for one year. (One of the consequences of the Quirino-Avelino split was the first impeachment effort ever attempted against a Philippine president.) However, when Avelino failed in his bid against Quirino for the presidency later that year, the two patched up their quarrel and Avelino's suspension was lifted in time for Quirino's proclamation as president.

The third, involving Osmeña Jr., took place in 1960. Osmeña was not yet a senator then, and was merely a congressman. He was suspended for delivering a privilege speech criticizing President Carlos P. Garcia's veto of an anti-graft bill. His suspension, enforced by a Nacionalista-controlled House, lasted 15 months.

Who can forget that Villar maintained a prudent silence in the Senate while signaling his wife, Cynthia, to join impeachment efforts in the House of Representatives? And who can forget the passionate and indignant rhetoric of the impeachment efforts against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, with opposition stalwarts—like Villar's Nacionalista partymate, Alan Peter Cayetano—thundering that the President should confront the charges, and not hide from a "climate investigation or Senate trial"?

And who can forget the long string of mental reservations and equivocations boiled down into sound bites by the beleaguered administration? That writs were catching flies; one for a search for the truth, but a political vendetta? That the motivating factor behind the moves of Cayetano et al. was neither justice nor accountability but publicity to rid of rhetoric? That the Palace trusted the courts but mistrusted the patently political processes of the House and Senate?

Yet today the formerly pro-transparency and accountability zealots of the Nacionalista Party and its allies haughtily proclaim the Senate ethics committee a "kangaroo court," denounce the investigation into Villar's allegedly using political office for private, real estate-related gain, as "politics," and shrilly allege a gerrymandering of Villar's case.

But to bring low Villar's supposed double-dipsomania in the C-5 road project is only one such necessary inquiry: there's the outrageous against Sen. Richard Gordon in connection with his "dual position" as senator and chair of the Philippine National Red Cross; and there remains the question of who among the senators allowed Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya to participate in an executive session with former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri during the ZTE-NBN deal investigation.

We could ask: Why didn't these prompt during Villar's Senate presidency? But more aptly, we do ask: What does Villar fear, when he himself has said that the C-5 scheme is "a very good project which I boast about" and that he is "sure five million of our people from Cavite, Las Piñas and Bacoor will learn to appreciate the project in time"?

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A balanced Supreme Court

SEPARATE OPINION

Augusto A. Cruz

I AM HAPPY TO SEE MY OWN CONGRATulations to the many felicitations Justice Conrado Vasquez must be receiving on his recent appointment to the Supreme Court. It is a well-deserved promotion from the Court of Appeals where he was not a ranking member but was there nevertheless on the strength of his impressive qualifications.

My knowledge of his merit is not based on mere hearsay for was my student in the 1st College of Law where he exhibited ever then his great penmanship as a promising lawyer and possible as a member of the Bench. As I predicted, he landed among the Top Ten in the 1973 bar examinations and was in due time appointed to the regional trial court.

In 2000, I chaired a committee with Justice Camilo D. Quiason of the Supreme Court and Justice Hilarion L. Aquino of the Court of Appeals to choose the best written decisions on civil law by the numerous regional trial court judges who had submitted copies of their best compositions. Our unanimous choice was the work submitted by Judge Bonifacio.

As the awards committee, we never stated to boast that our choice had been confirmed by another distinction. Judge Bonifacio had also been selected, by a different committee working independently from ours, as the writer of the best decision on criminal law. This must have been one of the reasons why he was found himself elevated to the Court of Appeals ahead of many of his senior colleagues.

His appointment to the Supreme Court has been criticized in some quarters, but not because of his supposed lack of the appropriate credentials. The objection is based on a supposed preference of the nominating and appointing powers for in-house members of the Judiciary over equally competent members of the Bar who have never sat on any of the lower courts.

The present Supreme Court consists of nine former members of the Court of Appeals and the Sandiganbayan, with only six "outsiders," so to speak, coming directly from the Bar with not having served some sort of judicial apprenticeship. I am sure the reverse do not look down on the newcomers, who also favour a fitting or two about the law despite never having handled a judge's gavel before.

When the Supreme Court was reorganized in 1980 following John U. six of the 11 original members had not previously sat as a Justice of the Court of Appeals. Two Justices, who was appointed directly to the Supreme Court in 1966, and five other practicing lawyers. To complete the 15-seat body, four other members were added later, two practitioners and two sitting justices from the Court of Appeals, to maintain the 8-7 balance between the old timers and the neophytes.

The other members chosen for that reorganized Supreme Court were Justice T. Yap, who succeeded Teehankee as chief justice, Jose Feria, who retired one year, Ricardo R. Perman and Andres D. Narvasa, who also became heads of the High Tribunal, Isagani A. Cruz and Leon Florentino Padilla and Teodoro R. Padilla, some of whom resigned (or scheduled) of succeeding them. We were all chosen by President Corazon Aquino without the concurrence or confirmation of the Judicial and Bar Council, which had not yet been even, of in the time.

What I especially remember about that Court was the way the veterans warmly welcomed us. They regarded us not as intruders but as members like them for the ideal of law and justice. I especially appreciated Justice Vicente Abad Santos, my former professor in UP and Justice Teodoro Bautista Melencio-Herrera, who helped us with the protocols and procedures of the Court and made us in due time experienced professionals like them.

There seems to exist the unwritten rule that some of the traditions of our Supreme Court like the seniority rule. This rule was not applied when Chief Justice Cayetano Arellano retired in 1928 and was replaced by Secretary Victorino Mapa from the Cabinet instead of Senior Associate Justice Florentino Torres, who unanimously resigned. It was later rigorously followed until Marcos chose not to observe it to punish Teehankee as "the bright light in the dark night" of martial law. CJBA modified its application in 2007, but gave it full force the next year in favor of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno.

I have no particular attachment or dubitation for the position of the Supreme Court based on their professional antecedents. Justice Jose Reyes came from the Court of Appeals before becoming the pandemic chief law officer of the Supreme Court; on the other hand, I am with a long time judge who said many a word during our sessions on how except when it was his turn to mumble the Morning Prayer. By contrast, look at lawyer Jose P. Laurel, who has yet to be inducted to an expert on customs. Jesse Mercado was prodigy from Mindanao starting on the Supreme Court without knowing much about anything.

I hope the membership of the Supreme Court will be balanced between the two groups by giving accustomed opportunities for the law practitioners to enter the highest tribunal. Elevation to the Supreme Court does not require previous incumbency in a lower court. Some unfortunate promotions of incumbent judges to the highest court may yet be redeemed by the appointment of competent but neglected members of the Bar.

God's presence

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT TWO PERSONS who were riding very fast on a motorcycle. They were stopped by a policeman who asked, "You were going too fast, Father. I will have to give you a ticket. What if you had an accident?"

The priest replied: "Don't worry officer, Jesus is with me."

"Now I have to book you. Three people aren't allowed to ride on a motorcycle," the policeman told him.

• • •

In today's Gospel (John 20, 17-31), we are told that it was the presence of the Risen Lord that transformed the disciples from locked-in-fear disciples' lives. It was His appearance and assurance that removed the disciples' rooted fears and doubts, and empowered them to become courageous witnesses. In our darkest moments of the Lord's presence be our greatest support, and for His unending greeting "Peace be with you," be our greatest comfort.

• • •

We all have fears. We all have insecurities, deep inside, around, and even between and among us! It is the presence of the Lord that can dispel our fears. Fears are insecurities and uncertainties when the amount of human assurance, and no amount of human efforts can unlock the prisons that cripple us, and the darkness that envelops us.

• • •

After Jesus died, the disciples were at the lowest and darkest moment of their lives. They were burdened by the heaviest negative emotions imaginable. You name it, they got it: fear, despair, guilt, remorse, shame and sadness. They were like sheep that were slaughtered, lost and scared. They hit the very bottom of their existence. But, in the supreme experience thereof, their Master was with them in their darkest hour, and He was with them in their lowest hit.

• • •

"Be still, and know that I am God." For those who have gone through, and are going through a dark night of the soul, or a nightmare-infested daylight, let this assurance from God be a source of consolation, hope and strength. In our utter helplessness and hopelessness, let us go back to God's heart and, there, find peace. Human remedies may come in handy, but in our darkest and lowest moments, we have no one but God.

• • •

Those who have never experienced brokenness, who have the world at their beck and call, cannot understand nor can they experience the reality of a merciful, loving God. During good times, God is there; but it is during bad times that God is especially there for us. It is at such moments that God becomes very, very real.

• • •

What happened, and what is happening to Ted Failon can happen to any one of us. Following up the unfolding events related to the death of his wife Tina is like watching a rewind of the Holy Week all over again. What we are witnessing in this Ted Failon tragedy is not just Ted, his family, his household. It is a microcosm of each one of us, and of our nation, going through passion, crucifixion, death and, yes, the Resurrection.

• • •

I was called to the New Era General Hospital right after Tina expired. The guards did not let me in right away. They had their orders and procedures. Fine, I mentioned. But when it took them awhile to let me in, I alighted from the car and told the guards that if there is such a thing as "obstruction of justice," there is also such a thing as "obstruction of grace." With that, they let me in.

• • •

Its words can describe the pain of seeing the lifeless body of a loved one who just expired. My heart went out especially to Ted and Tessa's 12-year-old daughter Bernadine, whose young and fragile heart could not comprehend what was happening. It was Good Friday all over again. There were not much words, just tears, crying, wailing, helplessness, questioning, and numbness, notwithstanding. It was when we held hands and prayed the "Our Father," we, finally, "felt well by them" that each one felt the presence of God, and a glimpse of light, hope, and the meaning of it all.

• • •

We saw a glimpse—or some sort of a reminder—of the arrest of Jesus when the relentless and unscrupulous members of the Bureau were taken into custody by the police. Orders, duty, the police justified their actions. How about compassion? How about basic courtesy? I have a lot of friends in the police, and I know how hard they try to do their duty and practice a good image of the Philippine National Police. It takes a few good men and women to make a difference, but it also takes a few overzealous, arrogant, insensitive men and women to hit the efforts of the good performers all go down the drain.

• • •

PHILIPPINE 3RD CENTENNIAL MOMENT: We host a four members of the Society of the Divine Word on April 12, 2009 (Easter Sunday). Fr. Simeon Bascuit, SVD, from Cebu City had a local heart attack while swimming at sea in Bohol. He was 68 years old. He was a valedictorian of three high school class and magna cum laude in Ad Philosophy. He was involved in the SVD-education apostolate most of his 68 years of life. He was a simple, humble, joyful and caring Divine Word missionary.

• • •

Burial: Wednesday interim rites to a lay Roman on Sleep December on April 25, 2009 at Arneson Hall, Christ the King Seminary from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. For inquiries, please call 3732362 or 09174107849.

• • •

A moment with the Lord.

Lord, it is your presence and your words of life that can lift us up and give us light. Amen.

Is Cha-cha dead?

WITH DUE RESPECT

Antonio V. Taguiwalo

THE FIRST IS ON SPEAKER PROSPERO NOGRALES. And he is resorting because he could not muster 190 signatures to support the resolution authored principally by Rep. Luis Villafuerte calling for Charter change (Cha-cha) via a constituent assembly (con-ass). Implicit in the resignation statement was that the con-ass would eventually install the pushers of Cha-cha.

Also a extension, before the onset of the Holy Week, Nograles promised to file the resolution formally in the House of Representatives so it would be publicly scrutinized. However, not having succeeded in getting the 190 signatures, all that he could do—other Congress sessions notwithstanding—was to move to extend himself an extension of up to June 6, the end of the congressional session, within which to move the process and get the required support.

The proponents believe—strongly, in my humble view—that the signatures of 190 congressmen, even without the participation of a single senator, are enough to comply with the constitutional requirement of three-fourths vote "of all the members of Congress" to pass constitutional amendments.

Theoretically, I wonder why Nograles fixed the number at "190." Currently, there are 238 congressmen and 23 senators or a total of 261 "members of Congress." Three-fourths of 261 is 195.75. That can be rounded off to 196.)

A congressman's journey during the House breakaway session last April 14 told me that the constitution has only 190 signatures. Here, it seems at least 18 more. Despite them best efforts during the last six months, the proponents still failed to get 196 signatures. Why?

Let us analyze. Of the 238 incumbent congressmen, 89 belong to the Lakas Party, 23 to Kampi, 10 to the Nationalist People's Coalition, 10 to the Liberal Party, 10 to the Nacionalista Party and the rest are distributed among the LDP, PDP-Laban, PDP Laban and Uno, also included are 20 party-list representatives and two independents. Except for the party-list, party affiliations are subject to change from time to time.

By this time, the proponents know that the Cha-cha is dead. Only the Yabut case remained: it lost on passage, area meaning and other measurements of methods of persuasion. And even if the 196 signatures are obtained, not all registrants as above explained would ignore the debate. That is why I think there is only one way for Cha-cha to succeed—and that is to install the pushers in the Malacañang.

Cha-cha railroad. How? Once the 196 signatures are obtained, the proponents will formally only demand the resolution to and compel the Commission on Elections to set the plebiscite process. The railroad option explains why the goal is 196 signatures. If the only aim is to muster 190 signatures, why wait for the 196? After all, only a simple majority is needed to convene a con-ass but 196 are necessary to approve the parliamentary target.

That is exactly how the House impeached President Joseph Estrada. After the constitutionally required signatures were obtained, then Speaker Manuel Villar speedily forwarded the articles of impeachment to the Senate without any discussion and formal voting.

Once this happens, the senators and the still-functioning House can run to the Supreme Court. This will put the Court to a litmus test. Will it stamp its imprimatur to such a mockery of our Constitution?

It will also trigger massive protests. Considering the latest First Quarter 2009 SWS survey showing the trust and performance ratings of President Arroyo at their lowest ever, expect plenting rallies and demos that will derail the Sinipit "rail drain."

In sum, Cha-cha is dead but is can resurrect if the Palace actively intervenes and greases the railroad. Barely functioning will not top the people, the economy, the hated Cha-cha supreme, the Palace will ruin the economy and fuel people power, moderate and armed rebellion.

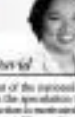
* * *

Comments are welcome at dhg@pchrguguan-kan@hotmail.com

Celebrities have rights, too

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



I HAPPENED TO BE TUNED IN TO "JAMBALAYA, Pulitan at Kanin" the morning of April 13, when Ted Failon—before breaking the news, real news of him, in Quezon City, "not ano, not rine, not three, but four" cases of carjacking had taken place not just "over four days, three days, or two days" but overnight!

Failon, a guard knight, especially as Failon presided to whatever the newly-appointed CIC of the Central Police District who was hard put to explain this boundless outrage. Then, as most everyone knows by now, Failon cut short his program to rush to the hospital where his wife, found hit with acids a bullet wound in the head.

In the hours since that traumatic incident, the Failon Ordeal and Arnelle Sandoz, along with the rest of his names, have gone through the wringer, the mangle, the shredder, the blender and every household staff have gone through it to reality. The Filipino people—or at least the segment that has followed their on-and-off lunch—have heard it ad nauseam, most probably telling them more than they ever wanted to know.

Some of us might also be saying, If the police need to shut on a nationally known broadcaster and TV news anchor of Failon's stature, then they must even more horrible crimes, whose every move and utterance are not being followed by the media, and it really for have this could you describe trying to drag a man away from the shuddered of his wife! Or taking siblings from their sister's bedside such that they would rather be anywhere else?

Some of us might also be saying, If the police need to shut on a nationally known broadcaster and TV news anchor of Failon's stature, then they must even more horrible crimes, whose every move and utterance are not being followed by the media, and it really for have this could you describe trying to drag a man away from the shuddered of his wife! Or taking siblings from their sister's bedside such that they would rather be anywhere else?

Some of us might also be saying that by their actions they were merely trying to prove that "no one is above the law" and that their treatment of Failon and his relatives and household staff was just standard procedure. But if this was standard procedure, then it is high time to change the plans of TV cameras, can you imagine what standard procedure must be like away from the klieg lights for non-celebrities?

I also can't help but remember the disturbing the C.O. of Camp Crame had to make in the early morning, and many other mornings when his and his cable partner Korina Sanchez got on the case against the suspension of the local Radio Station from Radio Station Asia.

Today, aside to reassures its short-wave broadcasting in numerous languages and search in the faithful (and even non-Catholics) in countries like Vietnam, Burma (Myanmar), India, China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and others. Radio Veritas faces new challenges. Its former "Bobby" Divina, SDS, PJA general manager notes that "the communication panorama has changed dramatically without warning," posing the questions: "What do we do in the face of this? What technologies changes in communication technology?"

For Father Bobby, the answer lay in "curatbalo and bravely introducing the new media) as a new channel for the very core of its mission: the evangelization of the poor. And in the process, RVA can reverend a willmaster of schleving new income."

Of course, wailing new digitalization and decentralization of operations (programs will be produced in the provinces for broadcast in Manila and sent to the Quezon City studios by Internet) will bring with it a new set of complications, but with a new generation of computer-savvy listeners tuning in through websites and blogs, the core challenge of Radio Veritas, Radio Veritas Asia can continue to claim its place and relevance in an ever-changing Asian communication landscape.

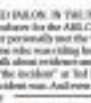
BOB Hey, described as an "internationally renowned worship leader," presents "Before the Heart of Worship," a gospel concert, this Friday, April 24 at 7 p.m. at the Megatent, Mendoza dr., cor. Pasig Boulevard, the Fort (Bonifacio Global City).

Part of the proceeds from the concert will help complete the Jubilee Homes for the Poor.

Ticket prices start at P300, P500 and P1,000. For more tickets and information, call Tickets@911 5555, Promo Inc. (632) 5281 Inc. 130, 0917 8111 888, Promo Inc. (632) 5281 Inc. 130, Ticket Inc. (722-2999), Mott Media Inc. (893 9346) and Ticketworld (723 9345).

The Failon incident

I DO NOT KNOW TED FAILON. IN THE INTEREST OF FULL disclosure, I am a producer for the ABS-CBN News Channel, although I have never personally met the "TV Patrol" anchor. I write this as someone who was riding home in a taxicab listening to reports on talk about evidence and possible tests and an investigation of "the incident" at Ted Failon's house, not knowing what the incident was. And now with affidavits and



METHOD TO MADNESS

Patricia Evangelista

front page accounts of the incident, I still do not know exactly what happened on April 15th, and will not attempt to hazard a guess on whether "the incident" was suicide or foul play.

The story is delicious, dramatic, the delight of every newsroom—a well-liked anchor, a mysterious wife, Failon's longtime ex, it becomes, as it is retold in cabs and cafeterias across the country, the stuff of soap operas, the sort that triggers the tortured imagination. Mood, tears, a woman arranged, an erstwhile king who falls from his throne. It was Failon who died, but, said some who shared their heads early. The suicide note, the gunshot wound, remember it now on the other side of the lens—and how he likes it.

I will say I was not surprised when lawyer Ferdie Acosta suddenly appeared on scene, wrapping a righteous finger against the police. The Public Attorney's Office is meant to offer aid to indigents who cannot afford legal services. There are hundreds of thousands, both innocent and guilty, who have been tossed into the cramped jails of this country without the benefit of competent representation. The PAO is only one body with limited resources, it cannot reasonably be expected to stand for all those who lie in mistakes or shelter are caught on the wrong side of the law. And yet the good PAO chief Acosta gave a call from Failon partner Korina Sanchez, and came to be interviewed via dzMM to defend Failon on national radio, and seem as far as to aid Failon in leaving the Quezon City police station in the midst of an investigation Thursday in viral his wife. Failon may have been the victim of police harassment, which Commissioner Nicanor Bartolome Rapsi Cruz Lola de Lima pointed out. But it is no reason for Senator to take the opportunity to dance in the spotlight for a man who, unlike many Filipinos, has the means and the intelligence to protect himself with elaborate representation. Perhaps indigent cases are not heard under wiretapping.

Public sympathy may not have been on the side of Failon when the incident was reported, but it is with him now, as he becomes the unlikely victim of police brutality. Many may have been interested in the story of the big man brought down by his own ego, but what happened after succeeds more. There are, after all, the same policemen who clog bleeding suspects out of public cars on television and on a recorded basis. They are the ones who complain about the unfairness of filmmakers and television directors for pursuing badly men in uniform, and who are outstanding to be portrayed better in "up our public ratings." They are the same good gentlemen who were mugging for the camera as Failon stood in his home on April 15th. After all, it was Failon who five years earlier pushed for the arrest of Jun Lozada and Joc-Joc Bolante in connection with the national fertilizer scandal. When the men behind the badge dragged Tessa Jocson's sister Imelda screaming out of the New Era General Hospital, it their while before Tessa breathed her last, they made Failon the victim.

The day Kim Jong, Failon's daughter said while on the air in the ABS-CBN newsroom last Thursday to the police: My mother killed herself. She exited her life and died alone. My aunt and uncle were knocked off in jail. My father is being accused, and is attempting to bring me jailed helpless and relatives together to be with my mother. The police are boundless. We have no material belongings remaining that I believe my mother chose to leave us and die. Now is there anything else you want to put us through?

Understand that this is what that admission means: that one girl has been pushed to a corner to a point that she is announcing to the public that she wanted, that mother who gave birth to her has been driven to death by the hands of her and stated by her has been driven instead to die, knowing the consequences to the two daughters left motherless and guilt-ridden.

Robertson ordered the watchdogs in front of the driveway, the helpers and even the two lawyers of Failon. They were asked for statements, and they were needed from. Witnesses: we've already here." Article 3 Sec. 12 of the Constitution requires the reading of the Miranda upon arrest, a concept foreign to many members of the police. Presidential Decree 1829, Penalizing Obstruction of Apprehension of Criminal Offenders, was a martial law decree, one that human rights lawyer Theodore Te has pointed out contradicts the Failon case. No body brought up this law when the government protected Senator Jinggoy Estrada from investigation, and the police are quiet when asked why they are carefully pretending to investigate the senator's cross-border plot to the military Palace officials admitted that arrests were made, repeatedly said Failon "left" or escaped the scene in any other person charged with serious, and yet instigated a "manhunt" when Failon left to the hospital.

In a country where Lady Justice keeps one eye open, the question then is this: if it can happen to Ted Failon, it can happen to us. If Ted Failon pulled the trigger of the gun that cost Tessa Jocson her life, then that is a case where the country will side with a murderer because they believe him more than the police.

* * *

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THEY SAID

Bomb threat

"The Arroyo administration is trying to defuse the bombshell that I will unleash. That is why they are trying the Ilocos case."

—Ilocos Norte governor, after an affidavit implicated him in the Ilocos Garbo slay

Big anomaly

"The Jun is frightened: piece politicians is a big anomaly in the Church and a dilemma. It's not a remedy, for many lay people."

—Singapore Cardinal-in-Minister Oscar G. Jr. on Philippine Sec. Ed Hontiveros' pro-choice

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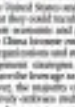
The future of the 'Beijing Consensus'

WORLD VIEW

Jonathan Holslag



BRUSSELS—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S first appearances outside North America—in London, Strasbourg, Prague and Istanbul—galvanized world attention. But what that say singularly failed to do was pave over a startling fact: the "Washington Consensus" is dead, but the idea of an economy should be run is now a thing of the past. The question now is what is likely to replace it.

Although China is often said to lack "soft power," many of its ideas on economics and governance are coming into accordance. Indeed, it is the economic success of China that has led Obama administration a clearly moving toward the kind of government intervention that China has been promoting over the past two decades.

In this model, the government, while continuing its benefit from the international market, assumes direct control over the economy's "commanding heights" through state-owned over the financial sector, restrictive government procurement policies, guidance for research and development in the energy sector, and selective curbs on imports of goods and services. When the Obama team set up a part of China's economic rescue package, list of Obama's stimulus plan as well.

China is clearly pleased to see that the United States is now also placing cost calculation of its economic policies at the forefront of its foreign policy. "In delivering a better life for people on the ground, one should be more concerned with substance than with form," Obama stated in an interview just before his inauguration. Rather than obsessing about elections, the United States now seeks to build a more pragmatic relationship with its economic needs. This requires, first of all, sorting up with China and the autocratic Gulf states—the main lenders in the US Treasury—as well as working with Iran and Russia to limit the violence in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As the US backtracks on its liberal credentials, it is flirting with what can be called the "Beijing Consensus," which makes economic development more a country's paramount goal and prescribes that states should actively steer growth as a way that suits national capabilities. Because in this worldview is not the success of any country's political system, but the extent to which it improves its people's well-being. At the diplomatic level, this implies that national interests, not universal norms, should drive cooperation.

This diplomatic and economic realism is more than a reversal of the neo-conservative mindset, flowing of the George W. Bush years. It is an attempt by a declining power to use its restrained capabilities in a more economical way.

For example, its rises of rise it is for Obama for a government to be more active, but by bolstering in this way, the United States has lost the moral high ground as a champion of free trade.

America's new pragmatism is also the consequence of a deep change in the balance of power. Over the past two decades, the United States and its European allies believed that they could translate the rest of the world with their economic and political principles. Countries like China became convinced in a series of multilateral organizations and adapted to its conditions. Now, as the US economy is in deep shape, the West cannot have the leverage to enforce those conditions. Moreover, the majority of developing countries now actively embrace multilateral bodies as part of their development strategies.

As we move from a unipolar international order to one with more regional powers, readers should allow them to err for themselves while keeping the room as low as possible. The result will be a new concert of powers, tied together by their fixation with national economic growth and the objective of discouraging others from creating instability that reduces investors.

Instead of restricting America with the rules and institutions it created, Obama's international ambitions are its own, the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) will assume a more prominent role in policing their own backyards. Russia can have its Eurasia, and if the generals in Burma (Myanmar) should go mad, it would become China's task to shut down its neighbor.

America's policy shift will inevitably erode the Western liberal elite. America has the flexibility, capacity and leadership to adapt to the new rules for pursuing diplomacy but Europe simply does not. Its strategic references, even in the liberal hawks, paternalistic, its Cold War mindset for them.

Realism will give the United States more manoeuvrability in the short term, but it will have to sacrifice some of its soft power to achieve this. Whether America is able to strengthen its global influence over the years will depend not on its military or economic talents, but on its ability to which it succeeds in revamping its economy and forging new alliances. The same will apply for other powers.

But this losing Beijing Consensus offers its promise of stability, it is a model of pessimism which is as strong as its weakest pillar, and requires a great deal of self-discipline and restraint. It remains to be seen how the American public will respond to its national U-turn. If our main players shifts back into economic turmoil, nationalism will richen and the world will become more unpredictable. Emerging powers of influence and frozen conflicts could again cause major conflict. And if China comes out of the crisis as the big winner and continues to loan its power, new moral thinking will soon appear, our anti-cooperation. Project Syndicate

Jonathan Holslag is head of research of the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies.

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to ...
Editor Jean Y. Sarmiento Jr.

BARANGAY SANITO

The village that thinks big

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE SMALL BARANGAY has a creative way of preserving tree plantings: if you failed to plant at least one tree, you cannot get a barangay clearance, which is required in applying for loans and jobs.

In the last two years, some 1,000 new trees were planted in Barangay Sanito in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay to comply with the requirement, according to Barangay Chair Jose Tee. He reports more trees to be planted this year.

Tee and other innovative rules, which also clap convictions from five violations, are compiled in Sanito's Barangay Government Code.

Endorsed since 2005, the code has enabled the village of some 9,000 people to build its own public market, community grocery, water distribution system and a kilometer of main road. The projects were financed solely by locally raised funds.

Citations

Thanks to the code, Sanito has been reaping local and international citations for its endeavors from the peace village scoring with illegal settlers, drug users and criminals it used to be.

It is among the 10 winners of the 2008 Galing Pook Award. It also received a special citation on "local capacity innovative mechanism" from the United Nations Development Program and the ASEAN Confederation Governance Organization.

"There is a law other barangays which have results, hurts and settlements," Galing Pook Foundation executive director Eddie Bonoan said. "But Sanito is so far the only barangay to have completed the settlement in a barangay code."

Strategy to meet goals

Bonoan noted that the barangay code not only listed Sanitos's mission, but also spelled out the strategies to achieve its goals.

"The code has implementing rules and regulations and that includes income generation that enabled the barangay to implement its programs," Bonoan said.

Sanito was once the refuge of the poor fleeing nearby villages during the height of the Abu Sayyaf attacks, which started just seven years ago. Sanito was left disorganized, dirty and crowded.

The then elected barangay chair in 2002 He found it initially hard to address the problems hounding the village of problems, mostly Christian residents and a small population of Muslims.

He claimed to be a victim of politics. Not allied with the municipal administration at that time, he requests to borrow trucks and motorcycles the town now usual, but was denied, he said.

Buy own equipment

The solution: enable Sanito to buy its own construction equipment and to do this the village had to generate funds.

Sanito was getting a P10-mill lion annual internal revenue allotment from the government, but the barangay needed additional funds to support other projects.

Thus, the 158 page barangay code was born.

The Sanito Barangay Government Code of 2005 says: "The internal revenue allotment and the receiving of support from the [local government units] in terms of infrastructure necessitate the enactment of ordinances that will raise funds especially for the construction and maintenance of barangay infrastructure and barangay roads."

VOLUNTEER residents of Barangay Sanito conduct a quarterly coastal cleanup.

To generate the funds, the code specified fees and fines for businesses and residents.

Education fund

It charges business permit fees, a practice common among barangays. But the code also charges local business fees for meeting conditions, for coastal resources management and even for its special education fund.

Residents also have to pay water management, peace and order, and garbage collection fees. If they are caught not cleaning the stretch of the street in front of their homes, they will have to pay fines of between P800 and P1,200.

Many businessmen initially objected to the code. "They were surprised," Tee said.

The business owners were used to paying a maximum of just P350 annually for the loan, rates permits, But when the code was enacted, they would have to pay up to P5,000 to include peace and order, waste management, coastline rehabilitation and water management fees.

Residents, most of whom work as caregivers in nearby cities of Dipolog and Dapitan, were also puzzled about the sudden increase in fees they now the barangay.

Some political rivals questioned the barangay's right to implement its own government code, but Tee cited the Constitution which upholds public welfare.

"I challenged them to go to the court," said Tee, who studied law at the Ateneo University in Cebu. He never got to finish his degree and instead started a construction business.

But the code survived the complaints. Nobody went to court.

The residents also got to see where the fees they were paying went. The code mandated the accounting of barangay finances by a non-government organization.

Council of elders

It also outlined the creation of a "council of elders" to advise the barangay chair. It's barangay council member ships. senators, national officials' approved, he must pay a P500 fine.

Those managing to raise only P40,000 before the code was passed, Sanito generated some P700,000 in local funds last year, Tee said.

The barangay spent some P400,000 last year for the construction of a barangay water system that will soon connect all households to the main water source. The barangay maintains a staff of 19 regular employees and 11 volunteers who get allowances.

"It is really different if you have money," Tee said.

The code also seeks to distribute residents while generating more revenues from fines.

It declares the entire village a sanctuary for wild birds, so catching birds is prohibited. The scale also orders those who buy pet birds from outside the barangay to take care of them "like that of a good father of the family."

Beerhouses can operate only until 11 p.m. Videoke bars can operate until 10 p.m. Vagrants are rounded up but are later offered jobs in the various projects of the barangay.

Garbage segregation

Households which do not segregate wastes are slapped with fines, just like those who do not clean their frontage. "We cannot clean the entire barangay so we have some work to our residents," Tee said.

"Everybody is deputized as an environment agent," he added.

If barangays can stand on their own, just like what Sanito is trying to do, perhaps the country can do away with one layer of government bureaucracy—either the municipality or the provincial government—to save money, Tee proposed.

"What happens now is that some municipal governments have delivered inefficiency by the services needed by barangay constituents," he said.

If the devolution in government hierarchy is abolished, the money to be saved can be allocated to further empower barangays, Tee added.

Being a barangay chair, to which he has been elected for three terms, is the most he can be in the political position he has held.

He claims to be the only politician in his family and says he intends to keep it that way. So, he is not interested in seeking higher posts, he said.

He has another proposal: how every barangay chairs should just be appointed instead of being elected. "There are very few independent minded barangay chairs at present," Tee lamented.

"If they are appointed as barangay managers, they will be less vulnerable to politics," he said.

FARMING are gathered in fish cages that are supervised by the barangay.

Promoting innovation and excellence

IN RECOGNIZING BEST PRACtices of local governments units across the country, Galing Pook award hopes to inspire officials of other LGUs, and perhaps, even reach the national government some lessons.

Its executive director, Eddie Bonoan, said: "There are many things the national government can ask if only it listens to the best practices that we find."

The award's mission is to "promote innovation and excellence in local governance" amid the widespread negative perception of the government.

Some 515 projects of 136 LGUs have received the award since it was given out starting in October 1993.

The Asian Institute of Management administered the awards until 2000. The Galing Pook Foundation took over after it was formally established as a private organization in 1998.

LGUs as small as a barangay or as big as an alliance of several provinces can nominate their projects for the award. The foundation honors projects and not the officials behind them.

The award looks for five main characteristics of a winning project, according to Bonoan.

• It should have a positive impact on the community and its people.

• It has a participatory mechanism to make stakeholders involved.

• It is sustainable.

• It is efficient in delivering service.

• It is innovative, providing new examples of answering problems.

Aside from recognizing best practices, the foundation has programs to replicate the winning projects through publishing case studies of winners and holding workshops where proponents of winning projects teach other local government officials who want to adopt their practices.

Several winning projects on solid waste management and coastal resource management have been replicated in other towns and cities, according to Bonoan.

Several issues also implemented a health insurance system inspired by the Bislig City-Local Health Insurance Indigency program in Negros Oriental, which was among the 10 winners in 2007.

Bonoan, himself a former mayor whose three projects during his three terms in Iloilo, Barangay, were honored by Galing Pook, said his personal relation was "the local government unit to be examples to the national government."

"There are many good things happening in many local government units which many people are not aware of," said Bonoan, who joined Galing Pook in 2007.

Supported by the Local Government Academy and the Ford Foundation, among others, Galing Pook Foundation awards each of the 10 winning projects every year with a P300,000 grant from the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Galing Pook received 136 applications in 2008. The following programs, aside from Barangay Sanito which was recognized for its unique and innovative 158-page barangay code, are among the 10 winners last year:

• The Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office earned use a disaster-management program electrifying their towns in Ivisan, Barangay, were honored by Galing Pook, said his personal relation was "the local government unit to be examples to the national government."

"There are many good things happening in many local government units which many people are not aware of," said Bonoan, who joined Galing Pook in 2007.

• The Allah Valley Landscape Development Alliance brought together two governors, eight mayors and several other government officials who are faced with an annual 8% million in losses from soil loads damaged by flood and soil erosion. The project identified watershed management programs in the river between Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato.

• The Bicaya A Lahaguna Ni Sinilagan program in Pampanga turned water contamination into quarrying into tourist sources of revenue and pride for residents. From an average of P12.5 million a year in quarry tax collections, revenues increased to P13.11 million in the first half of 2008 alone, benefiting 18 towns and barangays, and employing out illegal quarrying through a direct hotline to the governor's office.

• The Children First Program of Catubuan province sought to "promote friendship" among young Muslims and Christians.

• The Family Townhouse Project in Bagulo City aims to build 20,000 houses for homeless families by 2020. It has completed 322 units in two barangays since 2006.

• The General Services Office Warehouse of Marikina converted its supply management, giving the city about P2.4 million in savings on labor costs. The city also elevates Marikina into the Galing Pook award for Continuing Excellence for winning the award more than thrice.

• The Public Governance System in San Fernando, Pampanga, an idea adopted from the balance scorecard system developed in the Harvard University, aims to measure and track the performance of local officials in achieving community goals.

• The San Fernando City Project in San Carlos, Negros Occidental created a 20-year master development plan to transform its sugar-based economy into a "more ecologically oriented economic and industry." Not fortunate, it built an energy efficient city hall without air-conditioners.

• The rehabilitation of the Payatas dump open Quezon City in third Galing Pook Award. The city is recognized for its "pioneering and innovative programs to restore not only the contained environment of the site, but also to successful conversion into a controlled waste disposal facility." The bright symbol by the dump has been converted into electricity to power street lights.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

"Wiki ang alin kapak kini kung wala na mar bisquing nagal nandiskarte mapang yawalan? Hindi kaya parang halos nandiskriminang gobyerno ito at parang propaganda lamang?"
ROY SURBIDA, April 2009

GLOBAL Pinoy

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to 2489 (Globe/Isa 3852 Smart)

This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world to ensure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

They teach English to Chinese kids, execs

By Tiffany Tan
Correspondent

BEIJING—DAN Sanjanie could have been among the thousands of overseas workers who had to return home after losing their jobs in the global economic downturn.

But the 26th reunion had invested in a new ambition that paid off earlier than expected.

A year ago, the Cavitenon joined a teacher-training program in Beijing called TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), which equips participants to teach English as a foreign language.

She secured to gain more skills as the mandatory course of his profession dawned on him.

"In time, many young musicians will enter the scene, so you'll get left behind whether you like it or not," the 38-year-old said.

"Years if you try to keep your career up past 45 no longer fit in. But with teaching, you will never run out of people to teach as 18 you grow old."

Last September, Dan was hired by a local preschool where he initially worked as a substitute English teacher. He would play, sing and read to 2- to 5-year-olds in the morning. At night, he would belt out the latest hits in front of Chinese and expat bar goers.

ELAINE AQUINO: with her year-old Spanish-Arabian ward: "I don't want to be a nanny forever."

Family astounded

Dan was never a conscientious student—he even got into brawls in college—so the news that he had become a teacher astounded his family and friends.

"Don't pull my leg! When did you start learning how to teach?" was the reaction of one high school classmate, according to Dan. "What will kids learn from you?"

After 18 years of performing in Philippine pubs and bowls, Dan and his bandmates-with-Grins brought their act to China in 2005.

Across the southeastern port city of Xiamen, their music has taken them south to the Chinese capital. The couple has since brought a house in Nan, Canton, and is sending their two children to a private school.

Then last month, the world's economic troubles touched their dreams.

Dan's work visa opened. Goose and Duck sports pub, suddenly cancelled his performances, saying business was down. Fortunately, his consultant stepped in to fill his income and visa requirements. Once steady in full-time teaching, according to Dan, is none his "life suit."

Ticket into Canada

Henry Peñaroll Jr., Dan's TESOL classmate, says teaching is his ticket into Canada. A cavalier youngest child from Zamora, Isabela, the 33-year-old anxiety straddled into the profession.

Henry came to Beijing on a whim in 2006.

To make ends meet, he worked as real estate consultant, a magazine and resume agent, he even sold lasagna, toy- ey and buggeries to fellow Pinoys here.

In 2007, the bond and communication management graduate of the Philippine Women's University responded to an ecumenical online ad for volunteer teachers.

It turned out to be for the Australian International School Beijing, which eventually got him as a full-time kindergarten teacher. He is the only Asian English teacher at the school populated by children of some of China's rich and famous.

"The reason I was able to get into this school was that I really put in effort, professionalism," he said. " I admit that I'm not that good at teaching, I'm not that good in English. You have to work hard to attain good fortune."

Henry revealed however that he was often plagued by insecurities regarding his teaching abilities and still felt "intimidated" by Caucasian colleagues.

But for the first time in his life, Henry was sending money home every month. For the reading of their house, he said. Teaching has also given him direction in life: the same matrix on build to career as a teacher.

He is an persons looking for a distance-learning programs that confers a bachelor's degree in education, which he hopes will increase his chances of getting into North America.

Default job

Teaching English has become the default job for many Filipinos in China.

Language schools that cater to everyone from soldiers to company executives continue to mushroom in the country, where citizens are mainly of English as a key to success.

According to Philippine Business records, 209 of 2,298 Filipinos have declared themselves as teachers in China.

Since the information is given voluntarily, this represents only a fraction of the actual number within the 16 cities, provinces and autonomous regions covered by the embassy.

But work qualifications, along with visa regulations, have tightened since the Beijing Olympics last year. Employers increasingly want proof on paper of applicants's teaching skills.

"People could easily get by without having their certificate, but this is definitely changing because in most private schools, and even public schools, their standards are getting higher," said Sue Shaoling, tourist administrator at Hubei, a TESOL training center located in Beijing's crowded business district.

"People are realizing the importance of having a certified teacher," he said.

HENRY PEÑAROL JR: "You have to work hard to attain good fortune."

DAN SANJANIE: "We will run out of children to teach."

Three Filipino workers in China find new jobs and new drive to carry on

This is an exciting development for Elaine Aquino, a 41-year-old Bulakeña who has obtained a TESOL certificate and is ready to say good-bye to her job as a nanny.

Like Henry, Elaine came to Beijing without any job prospects. The 1992 domestic helper ended up leaving homes and leaving children and she got hired as a nanny by the family of a European dipl

Tears of relief

Although money is good and work is light, she wants a bigger challenge and a better life. "I've already told them I don't want to be a nanny forever," said Elaine, a petite woman with a powerful voice.

After hearing about TESOL from Dan, a neighbor, Elaine signed up for a five-day course when her employers announced overseas during Chinese New Year in January.

In her class of 21 people made up of various nationalities, everyone except her was already an experienced teacher. She almost quit after the first day.

"Conversations inside the classroom were in English," she said. "I felt intimidated, although I know what to say I couldn't open my mouth. Is this correct? I might say it when I should have said 'are.'"

But her confidence improved as the training progressed. On the last day, after giving her final speech, she wept in tears out of relief and happiness.

Aside from a chemistry degree, Elaine also has a diploma in cosmetology, a qualification that she thought would enable her to migrate to the west.

But if there is one thing she has learned from life, it is to be flexible, she said.

"When opportunities appear, you have to be ready," she said.

So the next time Elaine's bosses go abroad on holiday, she would probably fly overseas. She wants to check out the job market for teachers in Vietnam.

MAINTED VILLANUEVA/AFP: A worker for Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong needs massive repair to keep OFW bonding intact.

Saving Bayanihan

By Blandie S. Rivera
Contributor

HONG KONG—IT WAS 3:30 p.m. on a Tuesday and Lovy Canoneg is still up on a ladder painting the walls of a 500 floor room at the Bayanihan Heavenly Town Centre. A few feet from her, Lilia Nevales is bent on the floor, scraping off the bench the yellow tiles.

Volunteer Filipino domestic helpers like these two are the only people help the Bayanihan is getting nowadays, a noisy picture so it prepares to undertake a major repair of the crumbling building that would run millions of dollars.

The center needs, not only new paint, but new air conditioners, windows, dining tables, chairs, white boards, computers and sewing machines. More importantly, it needs new solar in the eyes of the people it was established to serve.

Soliciting aid

Lito Salazar, a trustee of The Hong Kong Bayanihan Trust which runs the center, is set to speak with different companies here and in the Philippines to solicit financial assistance for the renovation of the center which hosts hundreds of Filipinos every Sunday.

"If we tap professional partners, the costs would come to at least $3,500," she says.

Unfortunately, the free service rendered by Filipino workers can only go so much cost.

Many of the furniture and equipment being used for Bayanihan's programs for domestic helpers were either donated, like the ceiling fans, air-con and sound systems, or bought 15 years ago, like the dining tables and chairs in the canteen, which are now wobbly. The computers in the Internet Center are some of the oldest models ever, slowing down an already slow Internet connection.

The white wall near the entrance, which Filipino Americans and other guests only a year ago, is again marked with black shoe prints. A new plastic bag was taped on one of the windows to cover a lost pane. There are countless cracks outside and inside the building.

The state of disrepair of the Bayanihan Center is no measure for volunteer work.

"The Bayanihan is a prime initiative," Salazar says. "We have to support from the Philippine or Hong Kong government means for programs. But the administration not is what we want to address now. We need to raise funds for this."

Shop maintenance, replacement of air-conditioning units and broken windows, waterproofing of roof, and drainage system repairs will have priority, she says.

The estimated total cost of maintenance and repair for Bayanihan is $1.9 million.

With a mere $100,000 revolving fund, the center is thinking of charging agencies rent for the use of rooms at the Bayanihan. The Philippine Overseas Labor Office, for example, uses pay—for free—one room every Sunday to issue overseas employment certificates, while Filipino workers need to be encouraged from travel cases.

The only other source of income are the rental of the main hall and other rooms, but this is minimal to the free range with from $100 to $2,500. Membership fees are also negligible at $20 a year for individuals and $200 one time fee for organizations.

It was the Overseas Absentee Voting in 2004 that saved Bayanihan. After running without a budget for a year, the center became the venue of the first overseas voting conducted by the Philippine government. The event infused $100,000 into Bayanihan's coffers.

Money Pangilinan

Salazar says Bayanihan often ends up seeking support from Philippine telecommunications mogul Manny Pangilinan, who sits on the board of trustees.

Salazar, an accountant and lawyer by profession, says she will tap the corporate social responsibility budget of major companies here and in Manila for the needed funds.

Filipino politicians, who are expected to be more generous as the 2010 elections approach, are not on top of her list.

"There's no such thing as real charity for politicians," she says. "But if they think it's a noble cause and I don't have to do the dirty work, which I am now wobbly. The computers in the Internet Center are some of the oldest models ever, slowing down an already slow Internet connection.

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Across the NATION

Jobless get 3 months health coverage

LEGAZPI CITY—THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) is extending by three months the medical insurance coverage of hundreds of workers who were laid off as a result of the global recession.

The move came as top PhilHealth officials said the government insurance agency was in good financial health despite the crisis gripping economies around the world.

Dr. Roy Aquino, PhilHealth president and chief executive officer, gave the assurance in a media briefing here Wednesday, saying the agency has no stake in foreign investments, only in local government units.

Aquino, together with PhilHealth senior vice presidents Tito Mendiola, Gregorio Rafilelis and Isabel John Basa, is doing the rounds nationwide in line with the agency's advocacy for a PhilHealth-universal coverage.

"PhilHealth, considered as the biggest insurance firm in the country, is not affected by the current worldwide financial crisis," claimed Aquino, as he gave assurance that based on their actuarial studies, the agency is solvent for the next seven years.

Although he did not mention PhilHealth's financial source, Aquino said that to the field of insurance services, the agency's record in the last seven years would support their claim that PhilHealth is stable.

Aquino said that last year, PhilHealth's coverage had reached 74 percent nationwide and that by February 2010 coverage will reach near the 90-percent bracket in the goal for universal coverage.

He cited the province of Albay through the leadership of Gov. Joey Salceda, as one of the five provinces with universal coverage by PhilHealth, attained through the agency's sponsored program which now provides a 35-percent increase in benefits despite no additional fees in premiums paid by the members.

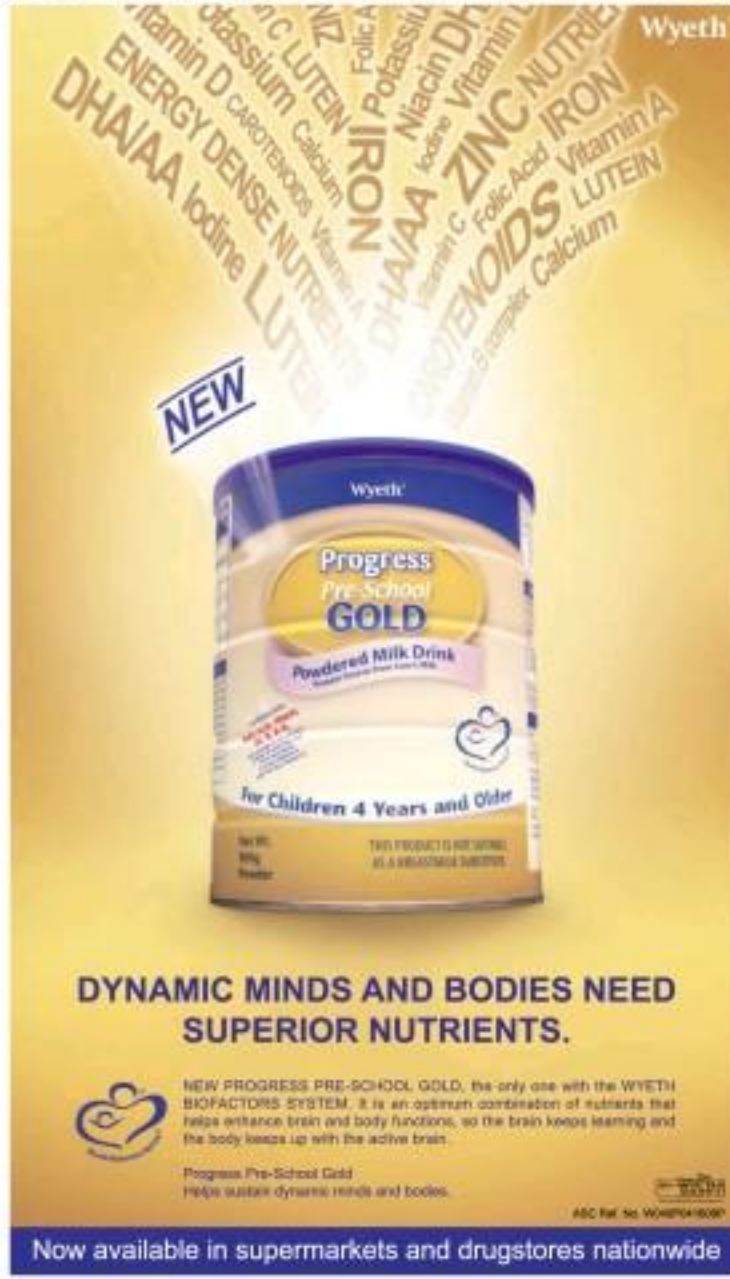
Aquino also said that for cases of financial crisis, PhilHealth offers special financing to members laid out of work.

He advised laid-off employees to seek the help of their employers to pay the premium for at least one year until the worker finds a new job or is rehired.

The government estimates that at least 63,000 seafarers lost their jobs as a direct result of the global recession.

Badly hit were manufacturers of electronics and other export products.

They suffered huge losses and were forced to lay off workers or cut working hours when orders for goods dropped in the United States and Europe, two of Philippine exporters' biggest markets. Eugene Nuñez, Inquirer Southern Luzon



Hunting, killing of endangered eagles continue

By Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—PHILIPPINE EAGLES, ONE of the rarest birds in the world, seem to be breeding well particularly in Mindanao for the past 10 years, but hunting and shooting them are still rampant, according to a recent study.

Because of the accessibility of their nests to communities, the Philippine Eagles fall prey to hunters who are still thrilled by shooting big birds, said Ayiesa Dañez, researcher and field researcher of the Philippine Eagle Foundation.

"For several years we have reports of eagles that were shot by hunters. Every year, we would receive a Philippine Eagle that has either a gunshot wound or was accidentally trapped after being mistaken for a wild boar or deer," said Dañez, who conducted a study on the Philippine Eagle.

"There were unreported cases of deaths. We had no way of knowing that the eagles were dying," he said.

Loyal birds

Dañez said eagles were vulnerable to shooting and hunting because they are loyal to their breeding and nesting areas.

Presenting the study during the annual Philippine Biodiversity Symposium at the University of the Philippines in Baguio, Dañez said conservation efforts must focus on approaches that would reduce threats to eagles.

His study identified the sites, including behavior and nest characteristics of Philippine Eagles (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) in Mindanao using data gathered from 1999 to 2007.

The nesting sites monitored for the study were Mt. Hamiguitan in Cateel, Davao Oriental; Mt. Diwata in Compostela, Davao de Oro; Mt. Kitanglad in Lantapan, Bukidnon.

"The nest sites were in the vicinity of settlements, but the eagles seemed to tolerate people," Dañez said.

His study noted that the Philippine Eagle is a large, broad-winged forest raptor endemic to Luzon, Leyte, Samar and Mindanao.

The bird is a "heavily pressured population of forests that are rapidly disappearing. It is one of the rarest and highly threatened bird species," Dañez said.

There were an more than 144 pairs in Mindanao, he said, adding that the number is still considered small as their population continues to decline.

The study also said the prey species or the food of eagles was also identified but only from a limited number of nests.

Belgian kills wife, self in Cagayan

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A BELGIAN MAN killed himself after shooting to death his Filipina wife in a fit of jealousy in Iguig town, police said.

Police identified the Belgian as Jhonie Constant Van Gheim, who allegedly killed his wife, Imelda Viesda, on Wednesday night in their house in Barangay Dimaluade in Iguig.

Gheim, who could not understand the local dialect Ilanes, had always been suspecting that he was the topic of conversation of his wife's relatives, police said.

The relatives said the Belgian had threatened his wife that he would kill her before killing himself. On Wednesday night, his wife's business partner in an offshore uniform commodity store made a call to Viesda.

This made the Belgian jealous, police said, quoting the relatives.

Gheim reportedly called his wife to their room, shot her dead and then killed himself, police said. Gheim and Viesda had one child each from their former partners, police said. Reinelyn Cabilas, Inquirer Northern Luzon

LEAGUE OF CITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

A Brotherhood of Leaders: One Vision, One Mission, One Nation.

STATEMENT OF THE LEAGUE OF CITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

The League of Cities of the Philippine welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court denying the Motion for Reconsideration and invalidating the conversion of 16 municipalities into cities. We thank the 15 magistrates of the High Court for the steadfast resolution of this case and for once again reaffirming the rule of law and the supremacy of the Constitution in this country.

The League of Cities firmly believes that the laws creating the 16 municipalities violated the Constitution by not complying with the criteria established in the Local Government Code. And this was affirmed by the High Court when it said that the 16 cityhood laws were null and void and in violation of the Constitution.

The High Court stated that the16 cityhood laws violated the Constitutional provision that "no province, city, municipality or barangay shall be created, divided, merged, abolished or its boundary substantially altered, except in accordance with the criteria established in the Local Government Code and subject to approval by a majority of the votes cast in a plebiscite in the political units directly affected."

Furthermore, "the Constitution is clear. The creation of local government units must follow the criteria established in the Local Government Code and not in any other law. There is only one Local Government Code. The Constitution requires Congress to stipulate in the Local Government Code all the criteria necessary for the creation of a city, including the conversion of a municipality into a city. Congress cannot write such criteria in any other law, like the Cityhood Laws," said the High Court in the decision.

The Supreme Court also noted that the cityhood laws even ignored the Local Government Code's Section 450, which has been amended by RA 9009. As amended by RA 9009, Section 450 sets the requirement that a town must generate P100 Million in locally generated income for two consecutive years to qualify for conversion into a city. None of the 16 towns met the P100-million income requirement at the time their cityhood laws were passed.

Moreover, the cityhood laws also violated Section 6, Article X of the Constitution because they prevented a fair and just distribution of national taxes to local government units. The Court said that the criteria prescribed by law are material in determining the "just share" of local government units in national taxes.

For the past two years after the conversion of the 16 municipalities, the existing cities have been denied their rightful share in the IRA because of this illegal conversion. The reduction in the IRA has greatly affected the delivery of basic services not to only to their constituents but also to the transient population that moves in during the day. Cities serve as regional/provincial centres of education, health, employment, trade & commerce, transportation & communication and recreation. It is but right that cities can now lay claim to these much needed resources for their growth and development.

We are aware of the ramifications that this decision will cause on the 16 invalidated cities. But we cannot also countenance the unwarranted conversion of a municipality that is not yet prepared to become a city and which has not complied with the requirements of the Constitution and the law. The Local Government Code as amended by RA 9009 sets the fiscal benchmark by which to determine the readiness, viability, and preparedness of a municipality to take on the roles, functions, and responsibilities of being a city, so it must be followed in all instances of conversion.

It is high time that we revisit the IRA redistribution and take a closer look at how the current scheme can become more responsive to the needs of the increasing number of municipalities converting into cities. We call on our legislators to undertake a thorough study of the IRA with a view to coming up with a bill providing for an equitable IRA sharing and for more stringent requirements for conversion of LGUs.

Another arrest warrant issued for cop in slay of radioman

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—THE new judge handling the case of murdered broadcaster Dennis Garcia has ferried up the issuance of a warrant of arrest against a relative of Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr.

On Monday, Judge Oscarmedes Medina of Regional Trial Court Branch 37 said there was indeed probable cause to charge Esp. Bolimpio Acharon with the Aug. 4, 2008 murder of Garcia, a broadcaster at the Radio Mindanao Network here.

The warrants against Acharon was the second issued by a judge here.

On Feb. 3, Judge Isaac Montes, of the Regional Trial Court Branch 36, ordered Acharon's arrest based on the complaint filed by the Department of Justice against the police officer.

Acharon was identified by at least two witnesses as one of the gunmen, who shot and killed Garcia near the Gaisano Mall.

But shortly after Montes issued the warrant, Acharon's lawyer, Rogelio Garcia, sought the quashing of the case.

Garcia questioned the "railroaded" speed of filing, raffling and subsequent issuance of arrest warrants, saying that the 14-day judicial determination of probable cause lapsing.

Garcia succeeded in convincing Regional Trial Court Executive Judge Oscar Noel to re-raffle the Garcia murder case.

Montes eventually recalled the arrest warrants he issued against Acharon, citing lack of jurisdiction due to the re-raffling of the case.

Montenegro got the case and on Monday, issued a fresh warrant against Acharon. —Aquilino Pimentel, Inquirer Mindanao

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Coal firm prepares suit vs DENR exec

A COAL-MINING FIRM IS SUING AN OFFICIAL of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) for alleged bias and for filing false reports against the company.

In a statement, lawyer and Semirara Mining Corp. (SMC) legal counsel Ramon San Juan said the charges will be filed against Regional Director Lipayon, acting regional EMB director. EMB is an agency under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In his statement, San Juan said Lipayon became hostile to SMC after the company opposed his request to replace the chair of a multisectoral committee that investigates environmental complaints put up by SMC.

San Juan said Lipayon had caused injury to SMC through "unedited partiality, evident bad faith, and gross inexcusable negligence."

He said Lipayon, upon taking over as acting EMB regional director in 2008, wrote to request for a change in leadership in the Multipartite Monitoring Team which oversees the two Kinds that SMC was required to put up to take care of the community's needs while in operation and after it has mined out its area.

The company opposed Lipayon's request, saying that the existing leadership and setup were functioning well and were involved upon the behest of the environment secretary. Soon after, San Juan said, Lipayon became hostile.

Last December, Lipayon, acting on a complaint by some residents of Sitio Barangay Bigte, Abaga asked the company to explain alleged siltation in the area, which was about 10 kilometers from the mining project.

Although the report was found to be false based on a February 2009 report of his own subordinates, Lipayon were shared and issued on the same day a Notice of Violation and Order of Wan against SMC.

He also submitted a report to Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, who sees not his opinion.

San Juan also quoted Mayor Reynaldo Gin of Caluya as saying it had been found that among the signatories to the complaint against SMC were a 13-year-old, a person long dead and an illiterate man whose signature was forged.

SMC filed a motion for reconsideration.

On March 9, 2009, Lipayon said the motion would be resolved once he received the report of the multipartite group that went to the area to make on-site inspection.

On March 28, the multipartite group reported that the allegations in the complaint "were all falsifications."

San Juan said, however, that he found that Lipayon recommended to Reinoza the closure of Semirara's washing plant, long before the awaited report. The motion remains unresolved until now.

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BY VICKI VARGAS

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Meningo back, kills 8-yr-old girl in Leyte

By Jaep A. Gabieza
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD girl from a Leyte town died on Wednesday due to meningococcemia.

The girl died just hours after the man admitted in the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC) in this city, regional assistant nurse Boyd Cerro said yesterday.

Cerro said the victim was from Barangay Bahol of Capoocan town in Leyte and was the first to die due to meningococcemia this year in the region.

Cerro said the girl was first confined at the district hospital in Carigara town, also in Leyte, on April 14. She was brought to EVRMC in the evening of the same day but she died the next day to attend 6 a.m., Cerro said.

The girl had high fever and skin rashes, severe vomiting and headache.

Cerro said he advised the girl's parents to bury her immediately to avoid the spread of the bacterial disease.

Six persons and two siblings were given prophylactics, or preventive antibiotics.

Cerro said health workers were hoping that the girl's would be the first and last meningococcemia case this year in the region.

INQUIRER Mindanao

Higaonons save forests of Bukidnon

By Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez
Alianza Dejawal

OUT THERE IN THE WILDS IN the last forest covers of Mindanao live the "katonmanuodan," the spirits who are the real protectors of Earth. So the Higaonons believe.

Assuring the sanctity of nature, indigenous peoples have embarked on an initiative to preserve the Kitanglad forest corridor that spans almost 16,000 hectares of watershed area bordering four provinces in Mindanao.

Through a pact sealed by the "Mimapod Declaration," five major Higaonon tribal councils swear to unite in preserving the sacred mountains of Kitanglad, Balatukan, Kalatuwanon, Panalilio and Sectangnan. The declaration, as named because it was signed in a place called Mimapod in Impasug-ong town, Bukidnon, cites the inestimable importance as a lifeblood for millions of people living in the lowlands.

"We believe that these mountains provide sustenance to all spirits... and that these mountains are watersheds of all major rivers streaming down to the provinces of Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Agusan and Cotabato," read the declaration.

Pledging their commitment in the declaration are the Agmilmon Mimapod Higaonon Cumadon, Kalasanon Tribal Council, Miradweng Higaonon Tribal Council, Dumalilo Tribal Council and the Manuvu'a Apo Gitogokan Tribal Council which together represent over 3,000 Higaonon families.

Amay Manangkilan Camping, leader of the management scheme tasked with leading the protection of the sacred mountains, says the areas are ancestral domains of Higaonons which their forefathers have nurtured and preserved using traditional sustainable practices.

"We are inhabitants of these areas for centuries. It is only natural that we guard and preserve the mountains for our own sake and for the sake of future generations," Amay Manangkilan said.

We are inhabitants of these areas for centuries. It is only natural that we guard and preserve the mountains for our own sake and for the sake of future generations..."

Building forest corridors

Helping the Higaonon tribes on capacity building are several nongovernment organizations. A project called "Building Forest Corridors"—implemented with the help of the European Commission—has Kitanglad mountain as a flash point owing to the indigenous forest corridor concept discussed by the Higaonon tribes.

In a three-day Higaonon Peoples Forest Corridor Conference held recently in Iraandeo Ideality, project enforcers lauded the Higaonons for their initiatives to protect the sacred mountains.

Environmental groups Mediamark, Non-timber Forest Products Exchange Programme for South and Southeast Asia, Upbuilding Life and Nature (ULAN), and the Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE) convened the conference to discuss ways of conserving the forests through sustainable and effectively managed ancestral domains corridors by indigenous peoples.

"Through generations the Higaonons have been able to assert their rights to cultural integrity and maintain ecological stability, which becomes clear if one takes a close look at the intact forest ecosystems of the Higaonons living around Mt. Kitanglad," said the group in a statement.

Gerlad Villapando of FPE said several endangered species, including the Philippine Eagle, have been spotted in Mt. Kitanglad and nearby forests.

"The presence of the eagle, the highest in the food chain, in the area proof that the forests are well preserved. These are signs forests that have not been exploited by man," said Villapando during the conference.

Traditional practices

In the conference, participants, including over 80 representatives of tribes, government officials, academe and NGOs, firmed up their commitment to preserve and expand the Kitanglad forest corridor. The conference also approved the Mimapod Declaration as they recognized the capacity of the Higaonons to guard the forest using traditional practices.

"Guarding the forests has been carried out by Higaonons without the use of violent means. Enforcement of customary law is proven effective to the only thing to do is to strengthen these," said Mike Dadilla, project manager of the Building Forest Corridor through Sustainable Ancestral Domain Management Project.

Padilla added that while the integrity of the Kitanglad forest corridor is facing an immediate threat with several mining applications being processed by the local government, efforts to preserve the watershed area already gaining ground.

"This project will empower local communities in the sustainable management of indigenous forest corridors through incredible explanatory concepts such as land titling, livelihood development, law enforcement, and conservation," said Padilla.

Tribal chieftain Amay Manangkilan is all too glad that outside help is pouring in to help them protect their habitat.

"We have existing Barong Kahoon or guardians of the forest who are regularly on patrols around the forest. We don't usually carry firearms but we have ways to defend ourselves and the forest if ever hostile groups enter our territory without permission," Amay Manangkilan told the Inquirer through an interpreter.

Under Amay Manangkilan's leadership, the Higaonons have been able to keep a tribal area of the forest ecosystem through customary conciliation and self-regulation of institutions and available resources.

Traditional resource management and conservation practices, called Pataganon and Hinu, have been lauded by experts as successful and should be strategically replicated in their replicated.

"This is why we are also aiming during the conference to replicate the Kitanglad forest corridor concept in other remaining forests of Mindanao, like the Mount Pinoleo in Zamboanga del Sur and Mount Balatukan in Misamis Oriental, among others," explained Padilla.

ALMOST 3,000 Higaonon families, like this one from Impasug-ong, Bukidnon, will benefit from the Building Forest Corridor Project supported by the European Commission. PHOTOS BY ROY LAGARDE/INQUIRER MINDANAO

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

Bright pavements perk up QC image

Renovated sidewalks boost business

By Julie M. Aurelio

WHAT USED TO BE PLAIN, NONdescript sidewalks in some major roads in Quezon City are now colorful pavements on which pedestrians can walk with ease and motorists park conveniently.

Instead of dull gray, red and yellow bricks have been laid along Visayas, Timog, Visayas, and Tomas Morato Avenues which lend a bright glow to the establishments there.

"I could even say that it will become a tourist destination. The businesses now have a better looking facade," said Quezon City engineer Josefito Cabangcal.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte started the sidewalk renovation program last year to boost the city's image. He zeroed in on the six four major avenues since these are particularly known as hangout places for the various shops, restaurants, bars and cafes.

'Waz look'

The inspiration for the red and yellow brick-lined sidewalks came from visits to China and Singapore in 2005, the city engineer said in a recent interview.

He noted that pavements in Singapore had a "neat" look to it unlike the common gray sidewalks in Metro Manila.

"It's like a tourist attraction. The pavements there are pretty to look at and there is a semblance of order," Cabangcal said.

The city government's special design group, along with the engineering department, then thought of combining red and yellow for their rehabilitation project.

But jumpstarting the P968 million project did not come without resistance from the establishment owners, who claimed the digging would slow down businesses.

"They said the cobblestones would damage their businesses. But I think they soon realized that the renovation would actually up the value of their stores," Cabangcal said.

The city government's design allocated around two meters of pavement for pedestrians and five meters as parking space for motorists.

The renovation, including the installation of streetlights, involved 1.2 kilometers of pavement for Tomas Morato Avenue, 1.6 km for Timog Avenue, 1.4 km along West Avenue and 1.2 km along Visayas Avenue.

Cabangcal said they also installed bollards or metal posts to differentiate the sidewalk for pedestrians and parking area for motorists.

'Hydropave' bricks

The city government used red colored "hydropave" bricks up to two inches thick in how the sidewalks, which Cabangcal said was locally manufactured and could withstand even light vehicles.

"Now the pavements are smooth and easier to walk on, and there are few sidewalk vendors left to in these areas," he added.

He noted that the contrast of red and yellow was pleasant to look at especially for motorists parking their vehicles in front of the establishments.

"It's not just for aesthetics. The city government sees it as an investment, so that the businesses would also look for ways on how to improve the look of their areas," Cabangcal explained.

He cited the case of Visayas Avenue, which used to be an enclave for several junk shops. "Now it has the potential of being a commercial area. There are more restaurants and night spots there because the pavement helps in attracting customers."

Cabangcal said they plan to turn over the care and maintenance of the sidewalks to the business owners.

"They will be in charge of making sure that the sidewalk won't be vandalized or the streetlamps won't be stolen. They are the number one beneficiaries of the project, and the city government only comes second," he noted.

A similar renovation program is planned on Mother Ignacia Street, Panay Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue, East Avenue and areas near the Quezon City Hall.

"We hope that people will appreciate the changes we have done to Quezon City's sidewalks, that it's now neater and much nicer to look at," Cabangcal added.

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Building lives th
microfinance pa

A quiet revolution is taking place in the countryside and it is bringing out the entrepreneur i rural folk. With this development, a rice farmer in a remote barangay will soon be able to chec data on prices and crop production, determine the best weather conditions for transplanting and even place an order for farm implements – all done electronically.

This dream of an economically empowered rural community is coming to life through the partnership of Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART) – the country's leading wireless services provider – with groups that share the company's vision of a progressive Philippines built through hard work, determination and unified action.

PLDT-SMART Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan is one firm believer in empowering the citizenry and forging partnerships among different sectors as vehicles for progress.

"The best path to welfare comes from within, and that no other empowerment is as effective as self-empowerment," he once told an assembly of the Management Association of the Philippines.

It is a belief shared by management and staff of the different corporate organizations he leads, which includes PLDT and SMART – the country's leading telecommunications companies.

"We operators will probably be more effective if we position ourselves as providers of enabling platforms and services. Our real task is to find and engage the right partners who are experts in their respective fields," PLDT-SMART President and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno said, addressing the Mobile Money Summit in Cairo, Egypt last year.

In the last several years, SMART has been providing and developing solutions that microfinance institutions (MFI) could use to perform seamless and efficient loan disbursement and collection transactions. It includes providing SMART Money services and mobile-based applications. MFIs specialize in serving low-income individuals who normally would not have access to bank loans.

Microfinance program

SMART's approach in building its microfinance program has three interdependent components, taking into consideration the target market and the current availability of infrastructure to make transactions in the segment.

The first component is the MFI Retailer Program which involves creating a network that provides services such as airtime load, internet access and SMART money usage for transactions such as purchases and remittances.

Under this arrangement, the MFI grants a specialized load for its clients who become SMART airtime retailers and enables the MFI partner to monitor the trade activity of the retailer.

The second component calls for the selection and retention of financially viable stores from regular airtime retailers to Money In-Money Out (MIMO) centers which can convert electronic cash to SMART Money wallets into physical cash, and vice versa.

The third component involves enabling MFIs to disburse loans and collecting payments via Smart Money. This includes the deployment of a Web-based menu that tracks loan payments to ensure MFIs disburse and reload their SMART Money accounts to MIMO centers and use them MFIs remotely via the mobile menu.

Hapinoy stores

One very successful project that SMART has been supporting is the Hapinoy program of MicroVentures, Inc. (MVI), a social business enterprise run by a group of young socially minded business professionals.

The project is an effort to empower sari-sari store owners by linking them directly to partner product manufacturers for them to achieve higher margins on goods sold, save on store efficiency measures and get into new business such as the electronic financial services offered by SMART.

Apart from securing a loan from a MFI partner, each Hapinoy store is primed to tap into new business opportunities offered by SMART like e-loading as well as merchandising support and enhancing overall store look through the "prepackaged database" component.

As of latest count, there are about 4,000 sari-sari stores under the Hapinoy program and they are all members of Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD), one of the biggest MFIs in the country today. MVI owns, which SMART fully supports, to grow the program to 100,000 stores nationwide by 2016.

The most successful Hapinoy sari-sari store have been able to grow the stores from an initial capital of P5,000 over two years ago to over P500,000

SMART Head of Wireless Consum

PLDT-SMART Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan

> ***"For store owners, it's a sure source of additional sales while for SMART subscribers in the community, it means easier access to leading cutting-edge SMART products and services."***
>
> DANILO J. ARCAYA
> SMART Head of Wireless Consumer Division

SMART

rough mobile, rtnerships

Bright smiles all over the faces of FIRST members as the Mobile Loan Collection Project for BMFB borrowers is launched in Cadre, Negros Occidental

Division Banko J. Molina underscores the value of the Hapinoy project as a vehicle for opening new sustainable business opportunities for aspiring Filipino micro-entrepreneurs, noting that the program will benefit both the store owners and the local community.

"For store owners, it's a rare source of additional sales while for SMART subscribers in the community, it means easier access to leading cutting edge SMART products and services," he said.

Information hub

Late last year, SMART signed an agreement with GSM Association (GSMA) to provide Internet connection and computers to 15 Hapinoy community stores in Batangas, Laguna, Quezon and the National Capital Region.

In this pilot set-up, SMART helps the owners of these community stores – mostly enterprising housewives – make the transition from manual to computerized order-taking and inventory management.

With connectivity from SMART, the Hapinoy community store is envisioned to become eventually an information center on market, crop production, weather, job, health and other data useful to the community.

Through a P2.5-million grant from GSMA, computer sets provided to the community stores were connected via SMART to business tools like bookkeeping, retailing, computer navigation and financial management to enable them to become more efficient and to achieve higher profit margins through direct linkages with suppliers via the Internet.

SMART Chief Wireless Advisor Orlando B. Vea hails the project that "gave small businesses like the neighborhood sari-sari store entry into the Information Age," as a private sector cooperation that is as relevant as it is necessary especially during this period of global economic downturn.

"This underscoring has the support of GSMA because we have the same objective of getting technology to reach far-more people – especially those who do not have the access, financial means or technical know-how," he said.

Global recognition

Other initiatives that SMART supports includes mobile-enabled loan collection for the Negros Women for Tomorrow Foundation (NWTF) and mobile money activation for the Rhodanda Multi-Purpose Cooperative (RMPC) based in Pebble Island in Quezon province. Both are successful and promising pilot projects.

The Negros solution includes the issuance of SMART Money Accounts to the NWTF and its borrowers as well as the deployment of a BSM-based system that reads loan payments at the institution. It was designed to address NWTF's major operating concerns, particularly minimizing security risks in manual loan collection. Collectors, in particular, no longer have to float with their safety.

NWTF is a non-government organization that provided a range of financial services such as savings, scholarships and micro-credit to poor and low-income women in depressed communities in the Visayas.

The Pebble Island activation project, on the other hand, was borne out of the need to provide poor and underserved communities affordable access to financial services. These areas are not serviced by rural banks or financial channels and they do not have any ATMs.

With the institution accredited as a MFBO (since, RMPC was able to convert electronic cash to SMART Money Wallets into physical cash, and vice versa. To ensure maximum utilization, RMPC members were trained on the use of SMART Money services.

One of the RMPC members who benefits from SMART Money is Ni, a 34-year-old sari-sari store owner who uses the mobile services to collect payments for rice and health products sold via a multi-level marketing scheme. Before using SMART Money, it took up to two days for him or most to reimburse Quezon and at least P600 to collect payments plus another P90/400 for van rental to retrieve his orders from a Bulacan supplier.

In all the microfinance projects, it was clear that SMART's role – being a telco operator – was to provide the platforms and services while engaging with partners who are willing and able to take advantage of this technology.

Despite being relatively low key, SMART's microfinance programs has not gone unnoticed. Last year, SMART received the World Business and Development Award which was given jointly by the International Chamber of Commerce, the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum, and the United Nations Development Program.

The award cited "its recognition the crucial role of the private sector in implementing the Millennium Development Goals and the promise of innovative and productive approaches to sustainable development."

More rewarding is the fact that SMART's partnerships with other private sector groups help enable people to avail of the advantages that mobile telecommunications brings and to realize their simple, cherished dreams – to live better lives.

Empowered entrepreneurs

Who wants to be a millionaire?

It's probably one question that should be asked of Filipinos who are pondering the decision to choose the micro-entrepreneur path that very successful Hapinoy store owners have taken.

If you pose the same question to Nonoy Editha of Quezon and Nonoy Rosa of Batangas, they'll probably answer "Yes, I'm on my way." They are just two of a growing number of enterprising housewives who are flashing that happy Pinoy smile these days.

They are currently very profitable and thanking the high heavens for the chance to benefit from the microfinance program that SMART and other partners have rolled out in their areas.

Take the case of Nonoy Editha whose sari-sari store was razed to the ground along with her house in 2002. She started with P4,000 from CARD NGO, the MFI which lent her this significant amount to rebuild her store.

In 2007, she became a Hapinoy store owner. Within six months, she was able to accumulate P100,000 in loans to expand her store. Today, she's managing 85 smaller Hapinoy stores together with her husband who helps run the business. They employ three other people.

Nonoy Rosa's tale is no different. She worked as a security guard and decided to open a small sari-sari store after she got married in 1995. She took out a P500 loan to start the store.

She has been a member of CARD NGO since and joined the Hapinoy program in 2007. Within a year, she was able to accumulate P150,000 in loans which she used to build her store in size.

At present, she is managing more than 40 smaller Hapinoy stores and employs two people. She also owns three stores, one of which is a pilot site for the SMART-GSMA Online Trading Post project. Because her's is one of the pilot sites, Nonoy Rosa can proudly claim that she learned how to use the computer and navigate the internet at age 49.

Nonoy Editha and Nonoy Rosa are prime examples of Filipino resilience and intrepid enterprise. There are the stories that provide inspiration to those who are struggling but nevertheless hoping. They are living proof that Filipinos can rise above the challenges that face the typical Filipino nanay and tay. Surely, today they are truly Hapinoy!

Successful Hapinoy store owners Nonoy Rosa and Nonoy Editha beam with pride.

Nonoy demo goes high-tech as she uses the barcode reader and trains her sales on SMART-Globe Online Trading Post

RMPC cooperative members check their phones as the Island Activation Project takes effect, launching mobile money transfers on Pebble Island

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quonio

Vatican slams reaction to Pope's condom stand

VATICAN CITY—CRITICS OF THE CATHOLIC Church's social teachings are trying to intimidate Pope Benedict XVI into silence, the Vatican charged in responding to attacks on the pontiff's remarks about AIDS and condom use.

In Friday's strongly worded statement, the Vatican defended the Pope's view that condoms aren't the answer to Africa's AIDS epidemic and could make it worse. On his way to Africa last month, he said the best strategy is the Church's effort to promote sexual responsibility through abstinence and monogamy.

France, Germany, the United Nations' AIDS-fighting agency and the British medical journal The Lancet called the remarks irresponsible and dangerous. The Belgian parliament passed a resolution calling them "unacceptable" and demanded Belgium's government officially protest.

Belgium's ambassador to the Holy See lodged the formal protest on Wednesday prompting the Vatican secretariat to issue its tough statement denouncing the Belgian role.

The Vatican deplored "the fact that a parliamentary assembly should base thoughts it appropriate to criticize the Holy Father on the basis of an isolated extract from an interview, separated from its context."

It said Benedict's remarks to reporters had been "used by some groups with a clear intent to intimidate, as if to dismantle the Pope from expressing himself on certain themes of obvious moral relevance and from teaching the Church's doctrine."

The Vatican said the criticism of the pontiff was hindered by an "unprecedented media campaign" to change or nullify the value of condoms in fighting AIDS while ignoring Benedict's message about the need for responsible sexuality and to care for those suffering from AIDS.

The statement was the latest sign of the Vatican's increasing defensiveness and frustration as it tries to get Benedict's message out. It follows a maelstrom of criticism—including from within the Church itself—after the Pope lifted the excommunication of a bishop who denied the Holocaust.

Vatican officials said they acted so forcefully this time because the Belgian ambassador required a formal, diplomatic response.

"The Vatican is responding to this protest in a measured and balanced way, but also firmly and clearly," said Vatican spokesperson Rev. Federico Lombardi. AP

POPE Benedict XVI waves to the crowds on March 18 in the capital Yaounde on the second day of his first visit to Africa, as pontiff. AFP

Obama seeks to thaw long-frozen relations with Cuba at hemisphere meet

PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD—President Barack Obama, seeking to thaw long-frozen relations with Cuba, said a gathering of Western Hemisphere leaders on Friday that "the United States seeks a new beginning with Cuba," and that he was willing to have his administration engage the Castro government on a wide array of issues.

Obama's remarks, during the opening ceremony at the Summit of the Americas, are the clearest signal in decades that the United States is willing to change direction in its dealings with Cuba. They capped a dizzying series of developments this week, including surprisingly warm words between Raul Castro, Cuba's leader, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The White House was well aware that if Obama did not address the issue head on, the issue would overwhelm the rest of the summit gathering. Earlier this week, the president opened the door to the discussions by abandoning longstanding restrictions on the ability of Cuban-Americans to travel freely to the island and send money to relatives there.

"I know there is a longer journey that must be traveled in overcoming decades of mistrust, but there are critical steps we can take toward a new day," Obama said, adding that he was "prepared to have my administration engage with the Cuban government on a wide range of issues—from human rights, free speech, and democratic reform to drugs, migration and economic issues." AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

CIA interrogation memos may lead to more revelations

WASHINGTON—Even as President Barack Obama urges the country to turn the page, his decisions to reveal exhaustive details about interrogation methods used by the CIA could lead to a flood of new disclosures about secret Bush administration programs against al-Qaida, current and former government officials said on Friday. At the same time, the new revelations are fueling calls by lawmakers for an extensive inquiry into controversial Bush administration programs, and Obama may have a challenge making good on his promise to protect intelligence specialists who acted within Justice Department interrogation guidelines from legal jeopardy. Some members of Congress and human rights lawyers are likely to press for new disclosures about the period of several months in 2002 when CIA interrogators began interrogating Abu Zubaydah, a Qaida operative captured in Mauritius that year, before the Justice Department had officially endorsed the interrogation program. AFP

Thai police comb scene of attack on 'Yellow Shirts' leader

BANGKOK—Thai police on Saturday questioned witnesses and combed the scene of an assassination attempt on a leading political activist as they faced speculations of state involvement in the attack. Gunmen wielding AK-47 and M-16 automatic weapons fired about 100 rounds at Sondhi Limthongkul's car in a drive-attack on Friday that wounded him along with his driver and an aide. Doctors said that Sondhi, founder of the "Yellow Shirts" royalist movement that helped topple former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, was recovering well after an operation to remove a bullet fragment from his skull. Sondhi's People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) said it believed "one or several" were to blame, a suspicion echoed by local media. AFP

Overnight star Susan Boyle says she's handling attention

LONDON—Singing sensation Susan Boyle says she's astonished by people cheering contests between her angelic voice and dowdy image after she was thrust into the international spotlight. The unlikely star, who sprang to fame after her appearances on a British reality talent competition became an online hit, said she loves the attention and isn't bothered by those who poke fun at her unpolished appearance. "It goes with the territory," Boyle said on Friday. "It doesn't bother me." In a telephone interview from her home in the Scottish town of Blackburn, Boyle did express some impatience with questions over her love life. The 47-year-old Scot raised eyebrows when she told a British television audience on Saturday that she'd "never been kissed." "It was said in satire, not an attack. Can we move on?" Boyle said, laughing. AP

Group behind plot to kill Bolivian president a mystery

LA PAZ, Bolivia—Bolivian officials were investigating on Friday who financed a plot to assassinate President Evo Morales and what an international group of alleged mercenaries—including two fighters from the Balkan wars—were doing in Bolivia. Among three men killed and two arrested in a dramatic police shootout in the opposition bastion of Santa Cruz, at least two suspects fought for Croatia independence, according to government officials. AP

WHAT'S INSIDE
Archers nip Eagles; Lions devour Knights /A26

Sunday SPORTS
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Guevara Liquigaz Tour champion /A28

Donaire stakes title

HOMITO Donaire (right) of the Philippines and Mexico's Raul Martinez strike a pose after the weigh-in. Donaire will defend his flyweight titles against Martinez today. AP

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'Filipino Flash' battles Mexican 'Cobra'; Viloria eyes Solis crown

By Marc Anthony Reyes

BEAT HIM TO THE "PERFECT" PUNCH.

With that tactic in mind, Nonito "The Filipino Flash" Donaire defends his IBF-WBO flyweight titles against unbeaten Mexican big puncher Raul "Cobra" Martinez today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Filipino fighter is a slight favorite to beat the Mexican in what he says is his last fight in the 112-lb division.

Standing 5-foot-6, two inches taller than Martinez, Donaire has trained on his speed while training, hoping to unload the decisive blows ahead of his rival, who owns an immaculate 24-0 record.

Former WBC champion Bones Ibiña tries to resist the IBF light flyweight crown from Mexican Ulises Solis in the other half of the double-world title fight card dubbed "The Flash and the Furious."

Solis, who has already beaten three Filipinos, is making his 108-lb title for the ninth time against Filipino-American Viloria, who is on the comeback trail after losing his title a year after winning it with a first-round knockout of Eric Ortiz in September 2005.

The four stars of this explosive program, which will begin at 8 a.m. to enable the pay-per-view pilots time to dinner in the US, homed through their morning weigh-in yesterday.

Donaire, who knocked out the 31-year-old Dan Kidunko in two years ago in Connecticut to win the title, topped the scales at 112.5 lbs during the weigh-in held at the Manila Hotel Centennial Ballroom.

After a knockout session in his last fight, Martinez came in just within the weight limit.

Viloria easily made the light flyweight standard while Solis, the champion of Filipinos Rodel Mayol, Bert Batawang and Donaire's older brother Glenn, came in at 107.5.

Top Rank Promotions chief Bob Arum noted that the morning weigh-in and fight schedule today brought to mind the classic Thrilla in Manila between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier at the Big Dome in 1975.

"It's a little unusual to hold it in the morning. This coincides with prime time in the United States when the fights will be shown on pay-per-view," said Arum, who is collaborating with Solar Sports in presenting the card.

The HBO boys reportedly cost $20 each, half of what Manny Pacquiao's fights eventually sell.

The top bout in the undercard pits Filipino Jerwin Ancajas against Japan's Hiroshi Matsumoto for the WBC bantamweight title.

Jonny Boy Jaro will go up against Yohko Kanjin in a 10-round special attraction.

After whipping Davilmayo in what Bring Magazine later awarded as the "Knockout of the Year," and "Upset of the Year," Donaire defended his title by beating Luis Maldonado of Mexico in December 2007 and Hiroki Mihara of South Africa last November.

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Pacquiao goes the extra mile for Hatton

By Roy Luarca

WHAT MAKES MANNY PACQUIAO different from other boxers of his stature?

Strength and condition-wise, not Alex Arthur has a really ugly? Pacquiao always goes the extra mile—especially now that he's competing for his May 2 showdown with Ricky Hatton in the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Interviewed by Sarah Stevens of Telegraph.co.uk on Saturday, Arthur said: "I don't know many fighters [with] the same extra work for a day, they won't do it regularly.

"Even in the ring, some on the sparmen, run on the dolly, run a very wheel," said Arthur, who is sparring Pacquiao's southpaw and physical coach Miguel Diaz.

In the same interview, Trainer Freddie Roach said it isn't unusual for Pacquiao to do 24 rounds of training before even considering his lunch because, "he likes it to work."

"Sometimes, I need to let him spend his energy and fly," said Roach, of the Pacman. "Sometimes I need to hold him down."

Giants, Aces tangle at Ynares today

By Manong B. Candila

ANTIPOLO—FIBA-Rookie team to get the ace in its top-five position. It plays Alaska today in the Shoulder Fifth Finals Cup eliminations at the Ynares Center here.

"We are hoping that our defense can hold up every game, this time against Alaska," said Powerhouse coach Allan Gregorio, whose Rookie Alaska Giants own a 4-2 record going into the 4 p.m. clash.

"Our goal is to finish the eliminations tucked in the top five, and every game counts as we can draw an chance to our top-

STANDINGS	W	L
San Miguel	7	0
Sta. Lucia	5	2
B-A Titan	5	2
Talk N Text	4	3
Purefoods	4	3
Barangay Ginebra	4	4
Alaska	3	4
Coca-Cola	2	5
Rain or Shine	2	5
Rookie Unit	2	5

TODAY'S GAMES
(Ynares Center, Antipolo)
4 p.m.—Rookie Unit vs Purefoods
6:30 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Rookie Unit

pick in the next two nights ago.

Sta. Lucia (5-2) is set to get back on track and keep its hold of sole second place when the Realtors battle the Rookie Unit (2-5) Energy Boosters at 6:30 p.m.

The 5-3 Realtors are pitched to prevail over the cellar-dwelling Boosters, who lost to the Aces last Friday despite a triple double by import Jeff Viernes.

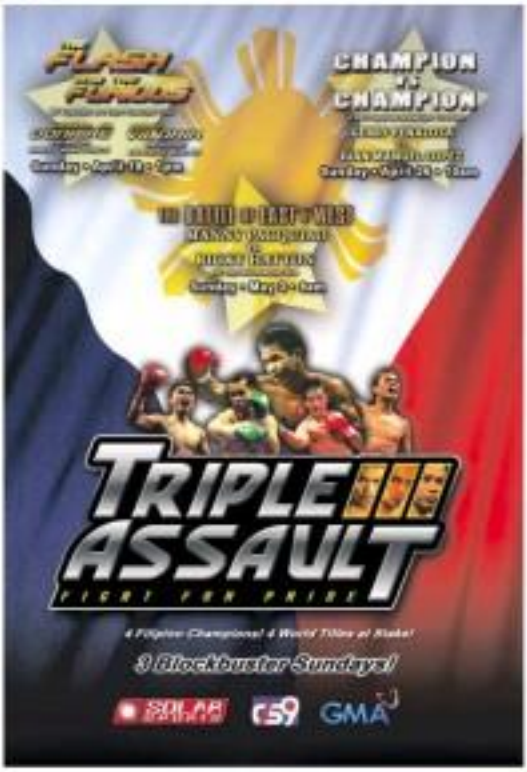
Purefoods won its last two games by holding its foes below 84 points. And it is the same weapon which Gregorio hopes to use against the Alaska Giants that got a scare before they could be sent two nights ago.

Callaway junior world qualifier tees off

THE CALLAWAY JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS QUALIFIER, THE main event of the Junipoh Summer Circuit presented by Philippine Airlines, comes off the ranges tomorrow at the well-manicured Wack Wack golf course, hosting the first of a total of a grueling 108-hole competition in the tennis, Tayle.

Considering that 30 slots for the Philippine delegation to the annual junior World event in San Diego, California this August 11 to 16 from our many private and exclusive golf clubs around the country.

The champions in the six age categories for boys and girls in the event which is also serving as the first leg of the Circuit, will be given free tickets to the World event in Los Angeles by Philippine Airlines.



Championship foes lift Sh

By Cedell P. Tupas

A REMATCH OF LAST YEAR'S TWO championship series kicks off the ninth season of the Shakey's V-League today at the Pilipinas 4 FIVONE arena in San Juan City.

San Sebastian, champion of the previous conference, clashes with Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) at 4 p.m. after Arenas-DiGiCom battles defending champion Adamson.

Tournament organizer Sports Vision has prepared an elaborate, five-hour opening program at 1 p.m. with Sen. Ambassador Ramon Revilla inaugurating the event.

The late Leo Prieto Jr., the founding commissioner of the PBA and the man behind the International Pastillas

Archers nip Eagles; Lions devour Knights

By Cedell P. Tupas

LA SALLE BROWED COMPOsure in the crunch and turned back Ateneo three and EAAP champion Adamson, 87-85, last night on the court of the Filoil Flying V Pre-Season MVP Cup at the jampacked Filoil Flying V Arena in San Juan.

The Archers, rebuilding following the departure of JV Cuño and Nino Muhlach, got a huge lift from Ruby Mendoza and several rookies, where coach Franz Pumaren said comprises "the best batch" of newcomers ever to pulled off a monumental snap back in 2004.

Three-time NCAA defending champion Ateneo de Manila launched its campaign in style, tripping Letran, 83-73, in the first game.

Malabon delivered a three-point play with 19 seconds left that decided the first meeting this year between the two bitter rivals.

Foundation tossers prevail; S

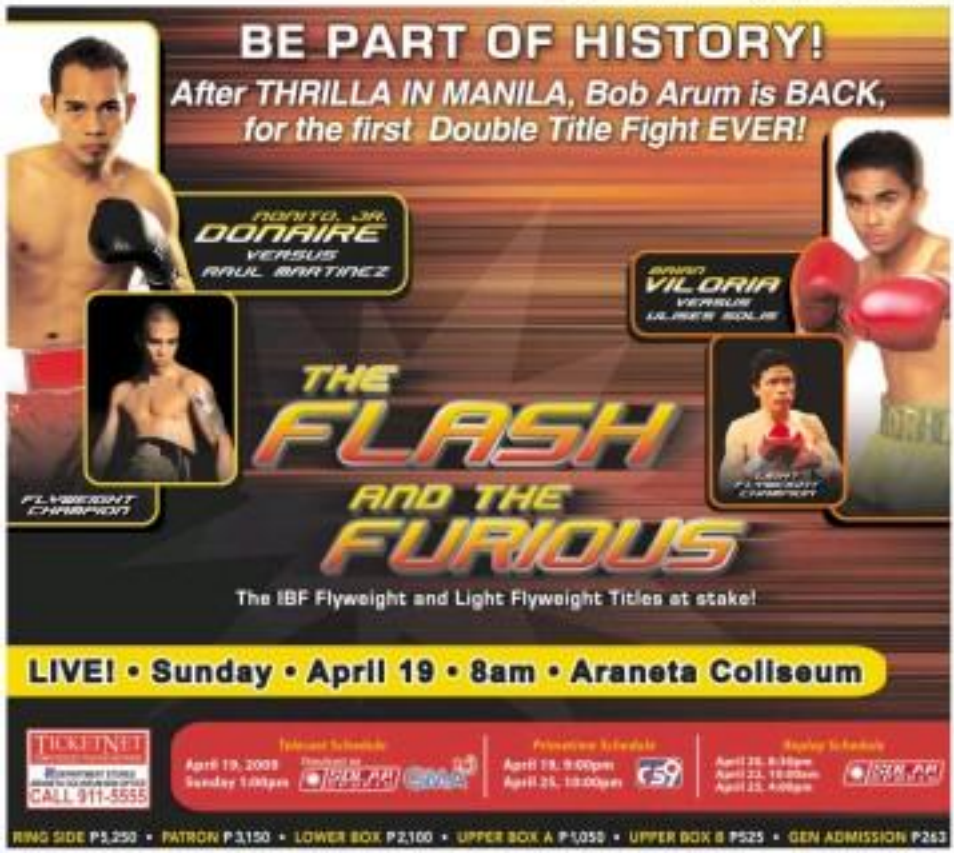
By Ronina S. Austria

MANDAUE CITY—FOUNDATION UNIversity will be back to defend its women's net crown but two-time women's winners, including 2005 defending champion University of Southeastern Philippines (USP), crashed out of the tourney round at the close of the 2006 Nestea Pit Stock Volley Masters leg yesterday at the Parkmall here.

Foundation downed University of Visayas for the leg championship in the men's division, 21-17, 21-15, and earned a first-round bye in the May 7 to 9 national championship.

University of San Jose-Recoletos, the 2002 and 2004 national champion, clinched the third slot at the expense of Iloilo Doctors' College, 21-10, 21-19.

IDC earlier ousted 2006 leg men's



...akey's V-League curtains

...Mbakeyic, will di... Lee Ann Lalipay and Stan De... ...er Mr Gois Gomez, ...teamers leading the attack line. ...an City Slayer JV ...San Sebastian coach Roger ... the opening re... Gorayeb acknowledged that his squad holds the edge with Dunlee and Peters around, but said the seven-silver teams are equally capable of riding the league.

...ase the odds on fi... "We have the advantage, but it's ...nal and guest player... difficult to predict because all the ...ding up the appeal ...teams have strong lineups," said ...s formidable with Gorayeb.

The tournament calls for a single-round robin eliminations with the top four teams advancing to the quarterfinal round, where they will be joined by top provincial teams University of San Jose-Recoletos and University of St. La Salle-Bacolod. The top four teams will move into the semifinals.

Titans now 3-0; Cobra triumphs

By Jasmine W. Payo

STANDINGS	W	L
Titans	3	0
Cobra	1	1
Magnolia	1	1
Lyceum	1	1
Pirates	0	2

GAMES TODAY
(San Juan Sport)
1 p.m.—Cobra vs Pirates
4 p.m.—Titans vs Magnolia

BENEDICT FERnandez fueled a late run as Far Eastern Titans came from behind to expedite Pirates Grenardo, 92-84, for their third straight win in the PBL PG Flex Gluta Cup presentation at the Ynares Sports Arena.

Fernandez jumped in 12 points, including back-to-back triples in a 17-7 burst in the final five minutes that pushed the Titans, who trailed by as much as 15 points, to a 90-80 lead from a 77-73 deadlock.

"We executed the plays well," said Oracle coach Glenn Capacio. "We played hard in the first half, but luckily we adjusted to their aggressive offense."

In the second game, Christian Lemerin and Rudy Lingganay sought fire in the second half to lift the Cobra Warriors past the Lyceum Lions' Boojoos, 74-70.

Oracle joined Alaska Milkmilk at 1-1 while Lyceum absorbed its second loss in three outings.

Pirates is at 0-2.

The scores:

First Game

SHELL 90 — Sotomayor 32, Fernando 12, Flores 12, Garcia 12, Alfaro 10, Mbakwe 10, Nieto 2, Dalisay 0, Dela Cruz 0, Ayala 0, Zamora 0

PIRATES 84 — Gallego 19, Jr. 14, Abalos 12, Sese 12, Zeña 9, Lalamentes 8, Ramos 5, Nikiel 3, Aguilar 0, Zamora 0

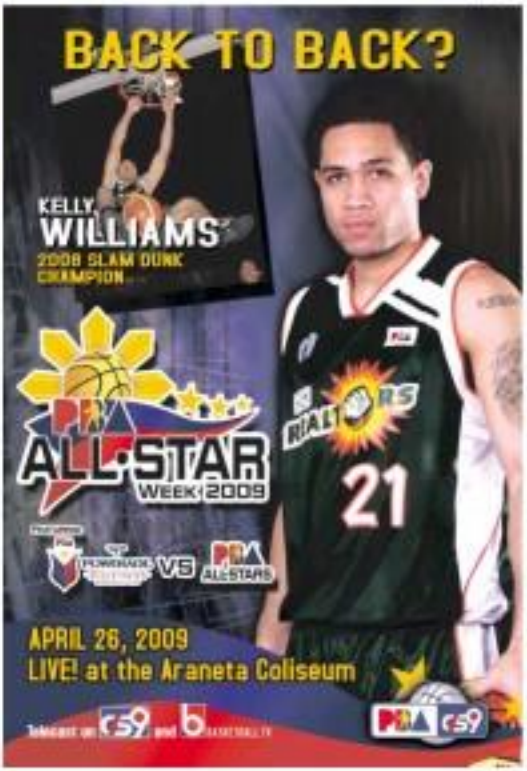
Quarters: 24-20, 49-36, 72-57, 90-84

Second Game

CEMEX 74 — Lingganay 18, Medina 13, Lemerin 12, Cuiza 12, Calaang 9, Tiada 4, Rutcher 4, Cleto 2, Mandaway 0, Pahamut, Lee, Ramirez 0

LYCEUM 70 — Cruz 25, Canedo 12, Sato 10, Bas 8, Nieva 6, Venkatraghavan 3, Trujillo 2, Cruz 2, Dalusay 2, Hugnatan 2, Manzanero 1, Sagandoi 1, Su 0, Ong 0

Quarters: 9-9, 33-31, 52-48, 74-70



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday SPORTS
SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2009

Guevarra Liquigaz Tour champion

THE MAIN palaces cruises past a giant statue of an eagle at the Eagle Park in Agoo, La Union during the Baguio-to-Baguio stage. NOEL CELIS

By Jove Navarro

BAGUIO CITY—MARK GUEVARRA stuck to his closest pursuers with able help from his T-Mobile-Bond Bike teammates and went on to nab the Liquigaz LPGMA Tour of Luzon.

The 23-year-old domestique's pro from Bajang Silang, Cabuyao rode with the 13-man main pack that included his chief challengers throughout the grueling, 395.6-kilometer Baguio-to-Baguio stage to keep the yellow jersey he goaled.

"I felt relieved because I knew I could protect the yellow jersey," said Guevarra, ably supported by teammates Marlowe Mariano, Dante Cagas, Joseph Millanes and Ronald Ginsoin, in Filipino.

"But I couldn't do it without my teammates," added Guevarra, also the winner of the third leg, who clinched the P50,000 top prize.

Guevarra, who leaped ahead after topping the Cabuyaonon-Baguio 69th leg Friday, bagged the title with a cumulative clocking of 25 hours, 29 minutes and 44 seconds.

Australia's Simone of My Phone Biz, who'd second overall, five minutes and 40 seconds behind, with Hilmon Mangubat of Batang Tagaytay coming in third, 6:12 off the new champion.

Baler Ramos of Batang Tagaytay won what has been considered as the "killer" Baguio-to-Baguio lap and emerged from out of nowhere to the 4th fourth overall, 7:41:05 down.

Ramos reached the rain-battered Shintohan Park to six hours, 46 minutes and 33 seconds.

The Tour will end at the Hacienda Highway in Pasay City today with the 13 teams competing in the team trial race where Guevarra's T-11/Road Bike Tour already clinched the P500,000 champion's purse.

NOTICE TO MAYNILAD CUSTOMERS AND THE PUBLIC
NEW WATER RATES FOR THE WEST ZONE

MWSS

Maynilad

Pursuant to the recommendation of the MWSS Regulatory Office (RO), in its Resolution No. 08-005-CA dated April 2, 2009, as approved by the MWSS Board of Trustees (BOT) in MWSS BOT Resolution No. 2008-068 dated 10 April 2008, effective 15 days after publication in a newspaper of general circulation, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) will implement a Staggered Rebasing Adjustment of 22.00% of the old Basic Charge and the Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA) for the 2nd Quarter of 2009 of 0.00% of the new Basic Charge. Maynilad will also implement, on an accelerated basis until fully recuperated to its customers, the Prepayment Adjustment (PA) of negative 0.75% for unsewered customers and negative 4.19% for sewered customers, and the Payment Incentive Adjustment (PIA) of negative 0.73% for unsewered customers and negative 4.30% for sewered customers.

All of these adjustments will have a zero net effect on the water bill of Maynilad customers.

Maynilad presently serves the West Zone which consists of the following areas: The cities of Manila (all but portions of San Andres & Sta. Ana), Quezon City (west of San Juan River, West Ave., Edsa), Congressional & Mindanao Ave., the northern part starting from Cloverleaf of the Holy Spirit & Batasan Hills), Makati (west of South Super Highway), Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon; all in Metro Manila; Cavite City, Bacoor, Imus, Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario, all in Cavite province. Maynilad has 18 Business Areas to serve its West Zone customers.

The new schedule of water rates for all Maynilad customers is as follows:

I. WATER CHARGES	Old Rate	New Rate	Old Rate	New Rate
A. BASIC CHARGE				
RESIDENTIAL		NON-RESIDENTIAL		
1. Those consuming 10 cu. m. or less (Lifeline consumers)				
(Net of 25% Discount)	P 62.10/month	P 76.13/month		
2. Those consuming more than 10 cu. m.				
First 10 cu.m/m	P 97.09/ cu.m/m	P 106.77/ cu.m/m	First 10 cu.m/m	P 81.05/ cu.m/m
Next 10 cu.m/m	10.84/cu.m	13.24/cu.m	Next 10 cu.m/m	17.66/cu.m
Next 20 cu.m/m	20.12/cu.m	24.79/cu.m	Next 20 cu.m/m	33.08/cu.m
Next 20 cu.m/m	20.56/cu.m	32.56/cu.m	Next 20 cu.m/m	27.09/cu.m
Next 30 cu.m/m	31.12/cu.m	38.19/cu.m	Next 30 cu.m/m	51.41/cu.m
Next 30 cu.m/m	32.63/cu.m	40.76/cu.m	Next 30 cu.m/m	54.06/cu.m
Next 50 cu.m/m	33.00/cu.m	41.38/cu.m	Next 50 cu.m/m	55.43/cu.m
Next 50 cu.m/m	35.40/cu.m	43.44/cu.m	Next 50 cu.m/m	58.26/cu.m
Over 200 cu.m/m	36.60/cu.m	45.29/cu.m	Over 200 cu.m/m	61.27/cu.m
BUSINESS GROUP I			BUSINESS GROUP II	
First 10 cu.m/m	P 395.06/ Admin	P 485.20/ Admin	First 10 cu.m/m	P 435.29/ Admin
Next 90 cu.m/m	39.10/cu.m	48.75/cu.m	Next 90 cu.m/m	43.70/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	39.98/cu.m	49.85/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	43.98/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	39.98/cu.m	49.85/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	43.98/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	40.13/cu.m	49.20/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	44.06/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	40.20/cu.m	49.30/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	44.32/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	40.46/cu.m	49.60/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	44.08/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	40.60/cu.m	49.97/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	44.69/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	40.70/cu.m	49.96/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	45.16/cu.m
Next 100 cu.m/m	40.90/cu.m	50.14/cu.m	Next 100 cu.m/m	45.80/cu.m
Next 200 cu.m/m	41.01/cu.m	50.28/cu.m	Next 200 cu.m/m	46.54/cu.m
Next 200 cu.m/m	41.21/cu.m	50.52/cu.m	Next 200 cu.m/m	46.08/cu.m
Next 200 cu.m/m	41.53/cu.m	50.92/cu.m	Next 200 cu.m/m	46.54/cu.m
Next 200 cu.m/m	41.53/cu.m	50.92/cu.m	Next 200 cu.m/m	46.68/cu.m
Next 200 cu.m/m	41.62/cu.m	51.05/cu.m	Next 200 cu.m/m	46.68/cu.m
Next 200 cu.m/m	41.70/cu.m	51.20/cu.m	Next 200 cu.m/m	47.26/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	41.98/cu.m	51.34/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	47.34/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.11/cu.m	51.70/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	47.61/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.34/cu.m	51.70/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	48.17/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.40/cu.m	51.96/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	48.44/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.41/cu.m	52.07/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	48.68/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.64/cu.m	52.29/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	49.03/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.64/cu.m	52.52/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	49.35/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	42.93/cu.m	52.84/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	49.67/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	43.13/cu.m	53.04/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	49.91/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	43.28/cu.m	53.26/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	50.21/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	43.39/cu.m	53.19/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	50.47/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	43.54/cu.m	53.80/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	50.82/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	43.78/cu.m	53.78/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	51.06/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	43.85/cu.m	53.76/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	51.46/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	44.00/cu.m	53.98/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	51.67/cu.m
Next 300 cu.m/m	44.14/cu.m	54.12/cu.m	Next 300 cu.m/m	51.98/cu.m
Over 10000 cu.m/m	44.35/cu.m	54.31/cu.m	Over 13,000 cu.m/m	52.20/cu.m

B. UFRA - P1.00/cu. m. of water consumption incorporated in the Basic Charge on the Billing Statement of the customers)

C. Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA): Percentage of the Basic Charge subject to periodic review and adjustment

D. E. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARGE (EC): 10% of Water Charge. Applicable to all customers of Maynilad.

F. SEWERAGE CHARGE (SC): 50% of Water Charge. Applicable to all customers connected to Maynilad sewerlines

G. PREPAYMENT ADJUSTMENT (PA): Downward adjustment of 0.75% of the Basic Charge for unsewered customers and 11.86% of the Basic Charge for sewered customers

H. MAINTENANCE SERVICE CHARGE (MSC)

METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per month)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per month)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per month)
1/2" or 13mm	P1.00	1 1/4" or 40mm	P 4.00	4" or 100mm	P 20.00
3/4" or 20mm	2.00	2" or 50mm	6.00	6" or 150mm	26.00
1" or 25mm	3.00	3" or 75mm	10.00	8" or 200mm	36.00

I. VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT): 12% of the Charges 1, 2, 3 and 4

J. PAYMENT INCENTIVE ADJUSTMENT (PIA): Downward adjustment of 0.73% of the Basic Charge for unsewered customers and 8.30% of the Basic Charge for sewered customers

THE MONTHLY BILL IS THE SUM OF 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

For Zero Transient Accounts
New Maynilad accounts will now be classified under Business Group I (Commercial) and accordingly will adopt the approved rates for said business group.

Approved by:
MANUEL P. ALEJO, Chief/Regulation MWSS Regulatory Office
HONORABLE JOSE M. ALLARE, Administrator MWSS
ROBERTO L. ONGPIN, Vice-President Maynilad

Maynilad

WHAT MAYNILAD CUSTOMERS SHOULD KNOW

BENEFITS OF THE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- Water services expansion to Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, and parts of Cavite
- Potable and reliable water supply
- Longer service hours and higher water pressure

INVESTMENT COMMITMENT

- P9 Billion in 2009 creating about 60,000 jobs
- P12 Billion in 2007 and 2008 for infrastructure development

ZERO NET EFFECT ON CUSTOMER BILLS

- Continue 20% discount to low-income households consuming 10 cu.m. per month
- Adjusted rate to be offset by an equivalent downward mechanism through termination of Special Transitory Mechanism (STM) and implementation of Prepayment Adjustment (PA) and the Payment Incentive Adjustment (PIA)

ACTUAL IMPACT ON WATER BILL EXPLAINED

	RESIDENTIAL	
	Old	New
Basic Charge (Min)	62.10	76.13
UFRA	10.00	10.00
FCDA	0.00	0.00
EC	7.21	8.61
SC	36.05	43.05
Prepayment Adjustment	0.00	(0.75)
PIA	0.00	(4.19)
VAT	12.00	12.00
Government Subsidy	(10.00)	(10.00)
Total Billing (Min)	117.36	134.85

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

- Check for internal leaks regularly and have them repaired immediately
- Recycle water. Use rinse water from washing clothes or dishes for flushing the toilet, cleaning the car/ garage and washing rags
- Report direct taps and illegal connections immediately to the Maynilad Hotline 1626

Finally, good news for Kings

SEMICOLLE IT WAS THE MEDIA WHO broke the news of the trade to Ginebra coach Jong Uichico last Friday night in remarks of the media after the game.

The press boys told Jong during the post Ginebra-Rain or Shine game interview that Barako Bing's Cyrus Baguio and Hotbox Ian Sand fans been acquired by the team, in exchange for Mark Isip and rights.

Jong said that was the only time he heard of the good news, although he didn't know that Ingles-James the Baguio were involved so early in the December trade.

The deal will through however, and Baguio ended up as Orange-King-rank teammate Colbert Cruz.

* * *

The DAP is really hot.

That early the country's three biggest broadcast networks are scrambling for the telecast rights to the 20-10 (Gilas) season, with ABS-CBN reportedly gearing up to join the bidding war.

The networks that have attended their bids are GMA, Solar and incumbent DAP franchise holder ABS-CBN.

From what I gathered, the figures involved start from P80 million.

* * *

Congratulations to eight-year-old junior golfer Ishia Sabi Stream, who scored her fourth hole-in-one in a practice round last Friday to qualify for qualifying tournament of the 2009 Callaway Junior Golf Championship at the Manila Southwoods golf course in Cavite.

Ishia's parent Isben Ismael Stream said she can't wait for the qualifying tourney to start the 7th hole of The Legends course. The first tee witnessed by fellow juniors.

The junior's only Manila International juniors in an increasing field grades at the School of the Holy Spirit in Quezon City. Ishia's brother is Ashton Rafa Stream. Isben Ismael is a former Ateneo soccer reporter.

* * *

BOOMING: It is true that Japeth Aguilar's Globe Tiger is increasingly considering an offer from the MJP for his services join the national team coached by Rajo Yaconian? The coach is flying to Las Vegas for training and meet up and Japeth, who had earlier committed to join the team for the Asiabasket, has been invited... By the way the coach is today's The Pitch and the Fortune at the Araneta Coliseum will be celebrity-studded. Politicians, businessmen, sportsmen, showbiz personalities, executives will be there... PBA legend Nonoy Cafiero is holding urge teams from the second district of Quezon City to join the Jun-Jun Cafiero Cup which will be staged starting May 1 at the Tiendi Wonder. Smoky said trophies and cash prizes of P250,000 for the champion, P150,000 for the runners-up and P100,000 for the 3rd starters up are in store. Its inquiries, call 09065126013.

IN HUDDLE

Ruth Cerby

Illam batters end Bacolod-West reign

By Cedelf F Tapas

INTERNATIONAL LITTLE LEAGUE ASSOCIATION of Manila upset Bacolod-West, 7-2, yesterday to capture the Senior League softball crown and Senior Girls title to bring all the wins in the Philippine Series at the Rizal Park in Manila.

But Illam also fell in a couple of upsets with an inevitable Final scorings 3-2 victory over the Manila-Ilam squad in the Big League softball finals. Tarlacos also pulled the rug from under 9-ram, 5-2, in the Big League baseball at the Rizal Memorial field.

But Ilam remained on track to match its feat in the national three years ago after its teams in four other divisions reached the next round.

Pitcher Jill Tanaka proved to be the difference for Ilam yesterday, giving up just three hits and shutting down run-homer against Bacolod-West.

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Sunday BIZ

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SELECTA staff and GK villagers have forged a real friendship

Taking the high road to number 1

Be helping others, Selecta workers helped themselves

Best of the Best

Top BPO companies of the year unveiled with PLDT

CONCEPCION plants seeds with GK villagers

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN employees of Unilever RFM Ice Cream Inc. thought that they were part of one big happy family that was working together to make Selecta the biggest selling ice cream brand in the Philippines.

Five years ago, workers in the manufacturing facility would not think twice about canceling their Christmas vacation just to meet the surge in orders for ice cream over the holidays.

Overtime stuff would gladly put in extra hours when asked to by their managers, and distribution personnel would go far and wide in search of new markets for Selecta.

But as management led by CEO, managing director John A. Concepcion became more and more relentless in its pursuit of the singular goal to make Selecta number one, family-like loyalty fueled many until it inevitably died.

Second place

And what's worse, Selecta... a product of a joint venture between RFM Corp. and Unilever—remained several steps behind the leader in the race to number-1 manufacturing in the ice cream sector.

"I was so enamored with being number one that I kind of drove the people hard," admits Concepcion. "We were so focused on the business that we lost the heart and soul of the company and the people along the way."

Employees filed numbers of strike. Negotiations became too legalistic. People became weary of each other and nobody seemed willing to do more without asking for something necessary in return. Arguments often flared up.

Concepcion consequently took a good hard look at where the business and people were headed.

He knew that something had to happen if he wanted to keep the people and the company together while staying true to the goal to be the number leader.

Thus "something" was a fateful meeting in 2005 between Concepcion and General Managers Jocelyn Tiong Mobayed.

Concepcion says that he did not know much about GK before the meeting. But in the earnest conversation with Mobayed, Concepcion became a convert and eventually a leader in the poverty reduction movement through GK.

"He told me, I do not want your money but I do need your time and your expertise. I was impressed by that. And as I talked to him some more, I became so excited. It was value. I was hooking [in]," Concepcion says.

And what unnerved his resolve was the subsequent visit to an urban poor village in Cainta where he saw people living near trash to a cemetery and a family of 20 squeezed into

TURN TO B2

HAZELNUT Bonanza, one of three new Selecta flavors

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

Dante Sebastian L. Bayan, Vice Chairman of BPAP, and himself nominated for the Individual Contributor of the Year Award, commented about his two-year ongoing partnership with PLDT. His company is one of many found out there on the telco giant's many ICT solutions.

"PLDT has been a true partner throughout the years. They've been instrumental in providing telecommunications infrastructure required for us to go into the core of their fiber optic network here. San Fernando is a prime city. Regular PLDT provided the full support needed for our first site in Baguio. I'm hoping to go forward on their Pan Pacific cable system. They've proved that they have redundancy to serve our clients in the USA."

Melissa Ramos, PLDT VVP and Head of Corporate Business Group graced the event and presented the award for the BPO Company of the Year, which was bagged by TeleTech Customer Care Management. "TeleTech truly deserves this award. We at PLDT fully support their efforts and our hope for us are them continue doing well."

On winning the much coveted dual award of the night, TeleTech's Senior Vice President and General Manager for Asia Wealth Pareth gave honor to where it was due, the men and women who work the phones day and night all over the country. He said, "This award really goes to our 11,000 employees who are making the fiber optic cables come alive with their Filipino pride, passion, commitment and care. They are taking care of customers."

Selecta's Jocelyn Tiong Mobayed (left) and Concepcion Bayan (right) receive the Individual Contributor of the Year award from Melissa Ramos, PLDT VVP and Head of Corporate Business Group

Tessa Bernardo of Philippine Life Corporation of PLDT and Tessa Gonzaga of E-Card Asia

A dream that passed the test

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S inauguration symbolized, to most Americans, the end of America's noblest dream—the elevated racial equality.

Fittingly, President Obama took the oath of office at the same site where Martin Luther King Jr. had given his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech almost 45 years earlier. An estimated 1.4 million onlookers gathered at the National Mall to witness the historic swearing in of America's first black president. The spectators came from every corner of the country and every continent of the globe to witness King's dream re-enacted.

Although the United States cannot claim perfection in race relations, there's no denying the country has made substantial progress in the 45 years since Martin Luther King Jr. articulated his dream of racial equality.

What made King's dream so potent? How did his dream inculcate a movement that so radically changed America society?

Because only MLK's dream passed the test:

1) King's dream was rooted in serving others.

Nearly everyone gives assent to the dreams of eradicating poverty, ending war and eliminating racism, but seldom does a man or woman devote his or her life entirely to a cause. To be frank, it's hard to live for something beyond one petty self-interest.

Throughout his life, Martin Luther King pushed himself beyond a quest for personal gain to seek social justice in America. People fought him for his dream, because they bought into the dreamer. They saw his personal sacrifices and rallied to his side.

All too often, leaders fall prey to the trappings of power, and their dreams turn into self-centeredness. King was able to avoid this hardship because of serving society by saving himself, he amplified his dream into an immensely powerful vision for the future.

2) King had a clear strategy for his dream.

To express the evils of racism, King's cadre of strategy involved mass demonstrations of civil disobedience and emphasized the tactic of nonviolent protest. Civil rights demonstrations were confined not to students when attacked, and were taught to shield themselves from blows instead of striking back.

It is no point over days to fight back against their aggressors.

The strategy worked wonders. Images of defenseless protesters being attacked by police dogs and beaten with night-sticks pricked the consciences of the nation.

The appalling scenes of violence motivated many to usher in the civil rights movement. Thanks to King's fiery but measured leadership, the United States was headed down the righteous of racism, yet was spared from widespread race warfare.

3) King paid the price for his dream.

Chasing the dream came at a steep price for King. He was arrested more than 20 times on dubious charges, and he was assaulted physically on four occasions. His house was bombed, and he and his family lived countless death threats.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. paid the ultimate price for his dream when he was assassinated outside of his hotel room in Memphis, TN. Although he was dead, the dream lives on. Americans of every color and creed can be thankful for Martin Luther King Jr., and the legacy his dream has given to our country.

Colonial Bancgroup The Leadership Within You Workshop on April 29-30 at the Iloilo Metropolis Hotel with 30-seat certified Author Francis Ong. Call 4072644 or 09178112318. You also can e-mail francis@francisong.com.

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

GOINGS-ON

ABM-RVR Center holds seminar

THE ASIAN INSTITUTE OF Management—Ramon V. del Rosario Center for Corporate Social Responsibility (RVR Center) will be organizing a roundtable discussion (RTD) on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Mining in the Asian region on April 21 at the ABA Conference Room.

Two active national mining reports—Dr. Esther mae Courtenay of Mining Watch Canada and Susana Obregon, the managing director of Business Advisor Group Australia—are scheduled to share best practices on key issues and concerns, current best practices and some gray matters on sustainable mining in the Asian region.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation hopes to enhance the sustainability and information exchange of the mining sector in Asia through the development of a CSR educational framework and teaching materials.

For inquiries, please e-mail rvrcenter@aim.edu or call 1521128, 8924011 local 2130 and look for Ms. Rina Acca.

Doing good is alive at Eastwood City

SEC TOPPERS CIRCUIT Design Inc. (TSCDI), a software design firm that originated in Japan and has a focus base and Philippine branch located at Eastwood City Cyberpark, in Libis, Quezon City, defies the stereotype of a technology company.

Aside from being among the fastest growers at the IT field, TSCDI has been engaged in promoting global corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts because the "think-a-difference Drive" in MICE.

"The acronym SEC also stands for 'Sales, Education, and Community Service,' which is at the heart of [the company]," explains Baron Fullero, a computer-aided designer at CEO Angeles.

Naturally, their projects are directed toward these advocacies.

Fullero has participated in at least all of them, and he is grateful for the experience. "Most employees are volunteers," he says. "We all enjoy the activities. They become 'bonding' moments for us, too."

In addition to their yearly initiatives, the company has engendered a breathtaking activity to benefit the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTI).

Dubbing 48 volunteers, SAE engineer Karl Arpon noted that the event was an eye-opener. TSCDI's successful business profits and gratefulness largely contributed to their youth, according to Fullero. "They say it's not strong point as a company because some issues pile-ups, and that we can be excited," he says.

It is just as promising that they are discussing the entire youthful situation in changing the world.

Sitel provides job opportunities

SITEL PHILIPPINES, A GLOBAL leader in outsourced solutions, announces the simultaneous graduation by extending free call center skills training to aspiring employees.

Called Sitel Mobile Academy, the 3-week 30-day free coach course is open applicants with the go-ahead industry-needed skills for future businesses process outsourcing (BPO) career.

As part of Sitel's Community Training for Employment Program (CTEP), Sitel partners with various local government units (LGU) to execute the required training program. CTEP is an effort under "Sitel Footprints," the company's comprehensive corporate citizenship (CC) program.

Sitel Mobile Academy graduates will be deployed in Sitel's state-of-the-art facilities in Cebu, La Union, Davao City, Bacolod City, Clark, Subic, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Baguio, Tarlac, La Union and Manila.

Sitel Philippines' facilities are located in Pasay City, Quezon City, Mandaluyong City and Baguio City.

With more than 40,000 associates and clients, Sitel's global footprint expands in Americas across 100 facilities, throughout North America, South America, Europe and the Asia Pacific Rim. For more information about Sitel, visit www.sitel.com.

Fishing for pets

TRAINQUILINO Marissa shows off his bounty

Text and photos by Marvah Erika Lesaire
Inquirer Southern Luzon

ILOILO VERDE, BATANGAS CITY—DIVING for tropical fish to sell to pet shops is far from easy, and Tranquilino Mendoza, president of a fisher group in the village of San Isidro in Isla Verde, about 23.6 kilometer away from the city.

"Fishermen have to dive from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. everyday to be able to collect the fish that they sell in Pasobuque or have three days a month," said Mendoza.

He explained that the weather would bring them a bountiful catch while typhoons and heavy rains could keep them from fishing.

On the island, the northeast monsoon winds, or amihan, occur from November to February, while the southwest monsoon winds, or habagat, occur from July to September.

Mendoza said villagers learned the trade from their forebears.

After six hours out at sea, the fishermen would go ashore and place each fish in a clear plastic bag filled with seawater.

The bags of fish would then be kept in a wet bulb on the road.

Lucrative trade

After four to five days, the fishermen would have a boat to transport their catch to the village of Tabangao in Batangas City.

"The best fee is P1,700, so we make sure that we have at least 500 to 1,000 pieces of assorted tropical fish to be delivered," said Mendoza.

Upon reaching the city, the fish would be carefully loaded on a second Manila-bound jeepney that cost P1,500 a trip. The fishermen's catch would be sold to pet shops in Pasobuque, Los Piños, Pasay, Muntinlupa and Mandaluyong.

With only 16 in Manila, the fishermen would usually make anywhere from P2,000 to P7,000, leaving deducted boat and jeepney rentals from their sale, he said.

According to Mendoza, the Hipocrite is the most expensive variety of tropical fish, ranging from P600 to P1,000 per piece.

"It is very difficult to find," he said.

The most common fish are Yellow Pitones, Golden Pitones, Longnose Pajitos, Yellow Longnose, Pinjita Angel, White Pitones, Spot Pin Anthias, Pink Anthias, Talisoma Wrasse and Neon Damsel.

Fish catch from pet operations are also sold in Batangas City Puerto Galera and Bauan, while other species are sold within the island due to high cost of transportation and lack of storage facility.

Threats

Jerry Perello, fisheries division chief of the Office of the City Environment and Agricultural Resources (Oeara), said over fishing of marine aquarium fish species could bring local imbalance to the reef ecosystem causing a healthy reef to collapse.

He said among the main threats to the health of coral reefs around Isla Verde are fishing with the use of explosives, siltation and use of cyanide.

"Fishing using explosives and siltation pose long-term negative effects on the health of coral reefs while the use of cyanide, if not regulated, may affect the abundance of targeted fish around the island," he added.

Environmentalists may not agree with targeted fishing, but they really don't have much of a choice as it is a main source of income for fishermen, said Mendoza.

He hopes that the government will help them with alternative means of livelihood so they will no longer need to catch tropical fish.

Only a few local leaders support fish-based activities on Isla Verde, such as Ocean City Planning and Development Office, and cooperatives in San Andres and Lipa spots, which all provide funds.

The island

Isla Verde lies along the Isola Strait between the Batangas mainland and Mindoro Island. It is one of the richest marine ecosystems in the country where one may find endangered petroleum, mammoth Japa tapa and whales.

The island has two barangay jurisdictional areas, the Mahaway and Poblacion Barangays. According to 2009 studies from the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute and First Philippine Conservation Inc., the two areas have high biological quality.

These researches hold a fish biomass

Print page B1

"It all sort of took off from there," Concepcion says. "With the right innovations, distribution and advertising, we became bigger and better."

Then finally in 2006, Selecto became the leading brand it had always aspired to be.

Selecto will be a stronghold on pole positions, accounting for a fifth more than half of the market.

It is not about to let go.

"We actually became another core business of GR. We became a venue," Concepcion says. "People have a happy disposition and employees are again with a happy disposition. Today, people are willing to trade in their holidays in to work more hours during Christmas and summer, our two busiest seasons."

That sense of fulfillment may be spilling over into the products because Selecto has been enjoying double-digit growth rates since 2006.

Concepcion says Selecto products may just be too good to resist.

Recently, it launched a trio of new flavors under the Selecto Gold series—chocolate truffles, berry strawberry and bourbon brownie—succeeded by top finds Belando Lucido (Choco Pilipino), J. Gamboa (Tabako) and San del Rosario (Chokoo Hukad).

Concepcion is confident that with improved employees again working together in one big and happy family for a higher cause, Selecto will remain number one in more years to come.

Taking the high road to number 1

FARMER John does his share

From page B1

a success story.

Blessed

"The rush and the zeal were apparent at URBI, realized that we were really all in blessed," Concepcion says. "Other people were either living in a shadow or living with the dead."

Suddenly, petty squabbles did not seem so important as they once thought. Helping the less privileged have a better life became a priority.

The first truth of that gets documentation was the GR Selecto Village in Gerona that 90 families now call home.

Concepcion was joined in its developments by almost all of the employees who were more than happy to pitch in and help build homes for the less privileged.

And in the weeks, months and years that followed, as they labored under the heat of the sun and survived it out together as poor cousins and plucky souls, that old family feeling came back to life.

Concepcion says that because of renewed feelings of goodwill toward coworkers, it became easy for management and staff to work together again. Consequently, new ideas and strategies to make Selecto the number leader emerged in quick succession.

Breakthrough

"We ushered in a renewals then and we focused on four sectors: investor, competition, distribution and advertising," he continues. "At that time, we were number two in a market that was not growing. We had to find a way to make people eat more ice cream," Concepcion says.

From a homecoming session came the Selecto 3-in-1 ice cream product that addressed the problem of families who wanted ice cream but could not afford to buy three different flavors.

It was an instant hit.

Blending business and art in a frame

Zandra Reyners Solares, owner of Frames Up on Elias Angeles Street in Naga City.

By Jonas Calderon Solares
Inquirer Southern Luzon

Some of the frames made by Frames Up.

NAGA CITY—LONG-HAIRED and fully bearded Zandra Reyners Solares, 58, does not wear trousers every time he walks the city streets or accepts job orders from his customers.

Solares is known to don short pants, paired with a collared shirt, looking exactly like the archetypal artist.

On busy days, someone would almost always hear a window sill and recognize him from across the street and yell, "Mr. Reyners!"

Solares is the owner of Frames Up, located on Elias Angeles Street here, not far from the Metropolitan Cathedral.

Customers go to his shop to have anything framed, from residency items to college diplomas and stuffed toys.

The shop, which started in the turbulent days of 1986, has outlived many of its competitors.

"We had just moved in Naga City at that time and were just starting a family," he said. "With my back pushed hard against the wall, I had to come up with something to support my family."

He said he did not intend to put up a frame shop, but was enamored by friends to start out due to a supposedly steady demand then, and availability of materials and other supplies.

His brother had a photo studio and provided him with some of his first customers, while his printer friend knew of a carpenter who made moldings; his solution, his painter friend also needed a helper for his artwork.

His first big customer was the owner of Silang Donuts, the predecessor of Biggs, now Bilao's largest homegrown restaurant chain.

One day in the 1980s, the restaurant owner passed by and noticed his small frame shop. The owner first asked him to frame his artwork.

Impressed by his work, the restaurateur became a regular customer. Solares soon became the regular framer of Biggs, providing some of the ornaments in the restaurant—framing the portraits of the likes of Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn—as customers to vintage ambiance.

He also framed pieces for the Naga City Museum and the Basil S. Reyes Library (known Naga City Public Library).

Solares said that, unlike other framers who let their customers decide how to frame their materials, he always asks to see that he is the one who decides what to do.

"It is where the artist is my center too," he said. "I decide the design. I choose what moldings to use, what color of mat to select. For something, how it should be glazed and what should be the colorations of the frames."

But, he said, if a customer does not like his work, he is always willing to rework the framing until his customers is satisfied.

He said he would frame anything for as long as the customer would have the guts to display it.

"I could even frame a car," he said.

Customers bring all kinds of materials for framing, including travel souvenirs, toy collections and other unconceived items—some are small as key chains or cellos as big as musical instruments.

Today, that my business seven weeks out week. That is also the reason why I believe we do not need to transfer our shop to a prime location. Our customers are the kind of persons who will think to [illegible] and consider."

But, he said, he is an unorthodox entrepreneur. He does not give fixed prices. But rates for work by simply considering the costs of materials used. And he is open to haggling too.

"For me, income is secondary. What is important to me I unlock my experiences while I am doing and expressing my art."

He said his business is just lucky to have a supplier that has weaved him through the years and lends capital in the form of financing to enable his ordering while providing his family comfort.

He said his framing business enabled his children to finish schooling while providing his family comfort.

He said his frame shop earns from P2,000 to about P50,000 a day.

"To sum, all you have to do is to check your expenses, whether it covers the basics or not. If it does not then, you have to stop it. If it does, then you must pursue it. You also need a love of home or business. You also need to invest in other things, apart from your main business."

He said what he loves about his business is the fact that it enables him to earn his family while doing what he loves most—creating art.

PDAP seeks to tie up with food firms

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE PHILIPPINE DEVELOPMENT Assistance Programme Inc. (PDAP), a non-government organization that supports community-based projects, has crafted a five-year plan to forge partnerships with private food companies at its annual dinner, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), will withdraw its financial support for the group over the same time period.

PDAP executive director Jerry Domasco said in an interview that CIDA had provided $3 million Canadian dollars since the program's inception 20 years ago.

But like many international donors, CIDA is shifting its focus to Africa, Cambodia and Indochina, Pacheco said.

Although financing will stop, CIDA will help in other ways," Pacheco said. "CIDA has committed to interchange as to other donors."

He said PDAP was seeking private companies willing to enter into direct supply contracts with it. PDAP-supported farmers as part of their corporate social responsibility programs. This way, PDAP will not be dependent on donors to keep community projects going.

Pacheco said that PDAP has links with 3,000 organic rice farmers, 1,000 organic vegetable growers, and 700 to 1,000 seaweed farmers.

These farmers can band together to supply food companies for niche products.

Pacheco said PDAP is also working support from the Department of Agriculture in terms of serving as a bridge to private firms.

Sunday BIZ

Looking for love? Try surfing the Internet

By Princess Daisy C. Ornigo

WHETHER WE ADMIT IT OR not, the Internet has become such a vital part of everyday living that life without it is almost unthinkable.

But how far are people willing to go to take advantage of technology?

Do more people go online now to find long-lost friends, relatives, even romantic partners? Are kids more vulnerable when they are surfing the Net than they are on the streets? How secure is secure in presumed by some security software?

ILLUSTRATION JUNREMULO

Improved relationships

According to the latest Norton Online Living Report, which surveyed 9,000 online adults and kids in 12 countries, mostly seven in 10 adults say that the Internet has improved their relationships with friends and loved ones, with a wide array of technologies, including web cams, instant messaging (IM), photo sharing and social networking, in some cases, making it easier than ever for them to stay connected.

E-mail is the most popular form of online communication among friends and families, with more of them using web cams and IM, and a few who use Twitter-like services.

One of the benefits of technology is its ability to connect people regardless of time and distance. People can now keep in touch with whoever they want in any part of the world, and also make more friends through the Internet.

Adults in China (86 percent), India (83 percent) and Brazil (82 percent) are the most likely to make friends online, while those in France (52 percent) and Japan (28 percent) are the least likely to do so.

Romance also thrives in cyberspace, with 1 in 5 adults flirting online, and 1-4 percent have gone as far as to rekindle romantic relationships, especially in India and Brazil.

Interestingly, in Japan and China, adults are less likely to meet online friends personally because they think that their online personas are smarter, funnier and better looking.

Aside from allowing people to forge new relationships, the Internet also helps strengthen existing ties.

While some admit to negative behavior online, the Internet is mainly seen as a positive and essential vehicle for communication and connection.

Indeed, technology can buy you love, but security risks are higher than you think.

Kids' new backyard

Kids nowadays spend more time online than their parents think, just as parents are only making up to the fact that parental supervision is needed the most.

There's company name alone is notorious to the kinds of products they provide their customers.

"I [Jojo] is short for 'Und is Good Always,'" said Joy, 48. "We're Christians ...and we give God glory by coming up with good products that work."

The couple started with basic bath soaps with five different scents, but they have since expanded to oils, lotion, toner and linen sprays, insect repellents, bath gels, scrubs and pet soaps and baby care products.

The couple, however, did not rest out to the cosmetics business. They used in lie in high-end, ready-to-wear ladies' garments...a business that was doing well until 1997, when competition considerably cut off the sexies.

"Filament Imports were allowed into the country from China, Bangkok and many other sources," said Peping. "We found it hard to compete with the imported products, which were usually smuggled."

The couple never listened to close shop in April 1999, but they welcomed the change.

"We realized that maybe the Lord was already taking the business from us, since we declared that it was His...not ours," said Joy.

The entrepreneurial couple, however, were limited to quickly find an alternative.

Peping was eventually interested in the idea of producing soaps—a consumer product that consumers would buy again and again. They started by repackaging laundry soap crisscrossing, which Peping found by scouring grocery stores.

Then they saw a display of natural soaps during a convention. Peping talked to the owners and they made him a deal.

Since the couple had extensive background in marketing—Peping an agribusiness graduate from UP-Los and Joy an economics graduate from UP Diliman—they decided to use the market first before producing their own soaps.

They repackaged the all-natural soaps with their own label, and they found a good market.

Their high sales during the Christmas season in 2000 encouraged Peping and Joy to finally produce their own soaps.

"If you want to grow your business and you want profit, you have to do the products yourself," said Peping.

After six months, the couple perfected their formula, which involved a lot of "human testing," those on their own household, such as those on Internet café or on a friend's house.

The good news is that 99 percent of parents are now open to taking measures such as talking to their kids about online safety (73 percent) and setting parental controls (33 percent).

Establishing limits to online activity is very critical and open dialogue and clear expectations are the most important steps.

Kids are also closing the cyber generation gap, with 25 percent of them "friending" their parents online and 18 percent are using IM, e-mail and social networking to link to their grandparents.

So how secure are you online?

The Norton Online Living Report states that 99 percent of those surveyed say they take steps to secure their personal information.

But the reality is that most people still do not protect themselves enough even if their computers have been hacked or lost important data.

One factor is the lack of awareness of today's data security measures. Computer users are usually relying on outdated virus scanners that do not address new threats such as bots, worms, spyware and zero-hr threats.

In fact, two of 10 of those surveyed admit they don't have security software installed and another two of 10 do not run virus scans frequently.

Most are also leaving themselves vulnerable by leaving unrated web sites (46 percent), not backing up data (35 percent), not changing passwords frequently (67 percent) and giving out personal information online (33 percent).

Benefits outweigh the risks

Despite the alarming data, people still agree that the benefits of using the Internet outweigh the dangers.

This technology, along with its tools, has connected people in ways that were all but impossible a short ago. In fact, adults would give up their cars or digital music players before giving up Internet access.

But without securing properly, users run the risk of losing some portfolios than they can handle. It is difficult to choose a comprehensive security suite and backup important data, Antivirus alone is not enough.

And of course, the best solution is still the simplest—use common sense. Do not use the same password for multiple accounts, never share personal information online even with people you know since it is very easy to access data once it is out there in cyberspace. Refrain from opening or clicking links from people or companies you don't know.

It is still better to be wary and cautious than to be hacked and sorry.

For couple, money is not everything

Text and photos by Annelle S. Tayao

BUSINESS IS NOT JUST ABOUT money. It is also about how to put it to good use.

At least, that's the belief of Peping and Joy de Mila, owners of Giga Ventures—a company that manufactures all-natural, vegan cosmetics all-based soaps and aromatherapy and spa products.

There company name alone is notorious to the kinds of products they provide their customers.

"I [Jojo] is short for 'Und is Good Always,'" said Joy, 48. "We're Christians ...and we give God glory by coming up with good products that work."

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OWNERS Peping and Joy de Mila at their V-Mall store

GIGA Ventures will stick to natural products.

They tried their products on themselves and on close friends.

The couple now do production in their office in Pasig and have put up three kiosks—one each in Greenhills, V-Mall and Shoppesville.

They've also penetrated some department stores and even part of the international market, with shipments to Australia, Singapore, Korea and Hawaii.

Success, however, are what paved the way for Giga Ventures to become more well-known to the public.

Peping recounts the first time they joined a bazaar.

"That was an eye-opener, because I've only had soaps and shampoo oils," said Peping. "We realized that we needed more items."

Giga Ventures added new products every year. The couple also plans to bring more products to provinces like Cebu, Davao and Bacolod.

Despite their goal to expand their product line, Peping and Joy are still limiting themselves to all-natural products.

"Sometimes though, you can't really avoid it," said Peping. "When we export soaps, we have to put preservatives, but only within the allowed limit...just to keep the integrity of the product." "It's less than one percent of the product," added Joy.

In the end, what matters to this business-minded couple is still their service to God, which they fulfill through their customers.

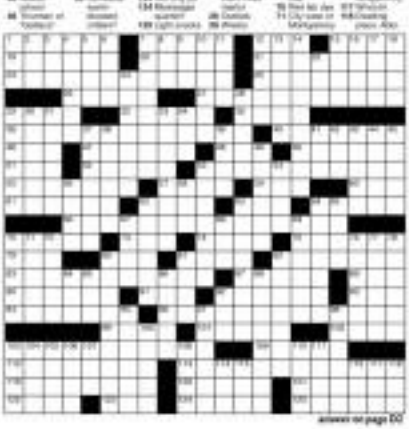
"We want to make our products work. No shortcuts," said Joy. "And we always instill that in our workers. Because once they (the customers) aren't happy, we won't hear about it, but they won't come back anymore, either."

GIGA's popular pure aloe line

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

FORWARD AND BACKWARD



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Sunday LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

HATE LATE? Call 911-11-11
Hot & On Time or your pizza's free.

Ambassador Bienvenido Tantoco Sr. celebrates 88th birthday with loved ones

Last week was a good time to people-watch in Boracay

AMBASSADOR Bienvenido Tantoco (seated, center) surrounded by his children, seated, Heidy and Bboy standing, Marilou, Mariles, Maricel and Marlene

By Maurice Arcadio

BORACAY BURSTS with prominent personalities and celebrities, galunggong. The six-star Shangri-La Boracay was packed with star-town's hottest name-droppables during Holy Week. And to think it just had its soft opening.

Last year, well-respected businessman Bienvenido Tantoco Sr. resumed his blessings of many years past. He hustled his entire family to a two-week stay in the exotic island of Mindoro.

This year, the noble-souled sprout another blessed year. In our very own world-renowned Boracay clubbings. The Tantoco patriarch, who turned 88 last holy 90-something, with his whole clan, enjoyed the resort on April 3-6. His birthday was on the 7th, clubbing. All his children and their children were there.

It was a simple bonding time

AMBASSADOR Bienvenido Tantoco Sr. celebrates 88th birthday with loved ones

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I'd to offer Double Dutch and Very Rocky Road on an ice cream stick format

I'd in the Philippines to offer ice cream in the Family Pack

I'd in the Philippines to offer 4 flavors in one pack

I'd to collaborate with Manila's top chefs to create premium ice cream flavors

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NUMBER ONE ICE CREAM NG BAYAN

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Community Building Across the Philippines

With 32 years of building experience and pioneering concept leadership, Camella's focus is on building living communities that embody recreation and progress with family and community life – creating a legacy of value for generations to come.

Camella has become the country's largest developer with communities spanning the north and south of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

No home and lifestyle is too far for perfect reach: a full range of options, from townhouses near city townhouses, to lush suburban single family homes, low-rise condominiums to luxurious high-rises. There's a perfect Camella home, depending on one's income and geography.

Camella currently has 87 projects and is present in 17 provinces, 38 cities and municipalities.

Ganito na kami ngayon.

Camella
A Vista Land Company

The #1 Home Builder

There's a perfect Camella home, depending on one's income and geography.

Camella's roots as a home builder date back to the nineties with the first development project undertaken by founder Manny B. Villar, Jr.

Over 30 years later, Camella has become the biggest developer of residential communities for the low and affordable segment in the Philippines. Having pioneered value for money homes in master-planned communities, Camella has now added to its offerings luxury single-family homes and city lifestyle residences, with innovatively conceived two-storey townhomes and low-rise condominiums. All of which come merged in a mixed-use environment to provide the ultimate level of convenience and comfort to its residents.

Camella is the top-of-mind choice among average income Filipino families and even among the Overseas Filipino market. To date, Camella has sold more than 200,000 homes through 87 projects, earning them the title of The Most Preferred Home Builder among the B and C socioeconomic classes.

Ganito na Kami Ngayon: Celebrating the Filipinos' Success

For Filipinos everywhere, a house is a testimony of personal achievement.

Camella's masterplan for success is simple: for every house they build, they see a Filipino family; for every subdivision they create, they envision a Filipino community.

It is the great Filipino triumph of living better than they used to. And Camella celebrates this triumph by continuously building new projects for Filipino families and improving existing ones. Camella affirms: Ganito na kami ngayon — not just as an echo to the progressive Filipinos' sentiment, but more importantly, as a declaration and commitment to continuously serve the Filipino family's needs.

Camella goes way beyond providing high quality housing. Creating an overall perfect environment for families is top priority. After all, people are not just buying a house. They're buying a home. A neighborhood. A community. They're buying peace of mind. And they do so because they are better off now. They can proudly say, Ganito na kami ngayon.

Nasa Hitsura, Nasa Loob

Living in Camella not only means having a better home, but also a better life.

For Filipinos everywhere, a house is more than a roof and four walls, or a place to simply live in; it is a testimony of personal achievement, a symbol of their aspirations for a better life for their families.

For OFWs thinking of buying a house for the family, a peaceful and safe community is their top priority, as they are away from their loved ones. Camella understands this, and hence, its communities are gated with round-the-clock security.

Family-oriented amenities like parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, clubhouses, its accessibility to public transport, and major establishments are delightful bonuses that add up to a better lifestyle for the Filipinos who have worked hard to taste sweet success. Bhoseen and Albert Maestrecampo who bought a house in Camella Savannah say, "When we were looking for a house and lot to buy, we saw the master-plan of Savannah and all the amenities reflected there are here right now."

"It's not just one swimming pool but two big pools and clubhouses for the major sections. Plus, the playground is really vast and the guardian's very nice. We can celebrate birthdays or simple family gatherings there," Bhoseen proudly states. "The feeling is really relaxing and we always enjoy bonding with our loved ones here."

Indeed, living in Camella not only means having a better home, but also a better life. Sa bagong bahay, may mayamang buhay. Ganito na kami ngayon, sa Camella.

Ambassador Tarasco with great-granddaughters Isabella and Nikki Huang; Patrick Jacinto, Mindy Tarasco standing, Mike Huang with wife Kathy, Catherine, Arrow and wife Nina.

TANTOCO family: Christian with his mom Cricketa (second from left), her daughters Camille and Nicole, and husband Dionie Tarasco

INFOBOX

HEPA B

An extraordinary travel brought to you by TIKI-TIKI

Para alaga from baby to 3

Start Korea!

TIKI-TIKI

Ambassador Bienvenido . . .

From page 0

to this family that rules Philippine retail.

Philippine Tatler's and Harrison Plaza's woman of substance Irene Marcial, with her husband **mega cardiologist Dr. Randy Francisco** and their daughter Isabel, also spoiled her birthday in Boracay. "This is my first trip to Boracay, would you believe? I'm glad I waited 'til now to come. This is the perfect hotel for me to stay in. Iron sun, no."

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, her husband, daughter, sons, in-laws and grandchildren were impressed with the hotel.

Hijrat, New Zealand Prime Minister Michael Armour wished the resort hotel's staff his victorious go.

Gov. Edwardo Enerio was seen also enjoying the place. Businessman Mon Tarasco and his wife charity-oriented Anna Ratigbol Tarasco were pleasantly amazed.

Arja Rosal hotel and restaurant's Chey Calanggo with his family had lunch at the excellent Serena Restaurant. Restaurateur Sonia Ibbot and client Gayle with stock broker queen Mona Farbanger were also there.

Margot Go's sister, royal, Princess Marion Santos, also had a great time, pahinggan, and even invited friends who were staying in other resorts to have lunch with her.

Visiting from their homes in Belgium and Ghana were former mega model of Yves Saint Laurent and Givenchy, now business entrepreneur, stewardess Irma Agustin and her darling husband Christian Bonvoy and gorgeous daughter Tiara. She was also impressed with the world-class island hotel—"This place is absolutely gorgeous."

Also seen in the resort were business icon Deh Bonato with children Sandy Squilbardi and a daughter who lives abroad with close friends, Tommy and Dina Campos, plus other hotelworks, dubbing.

I can definitely answer you, pahinggan, that this won't be their last visit to the awesome Shangri-La Boracay Resort. (Odette)

ALAMA and Dina Tarasco

DONNIE with Ambassador Tarasco and Katrina; (standing) Paolo Lobregat, Cricketa and Christian Tarasco

TOKICA Aguirre with dad Christian Bonvoy and his wife, businesswoman Tetta Agustin

MAITHOAY celebration for the Francisco Cardiologist Randy Francisco, super smart daughter Isabel and birthday girl Irene Marcial Francisco

MOEY and Kris Lopez, Gigga and Aamack Tarasco, Paolo Tarasco (standing) Mindy Velasco, Bea Tarasco, Nico Tarasco, Cricketa and Dionie Tarasco, Katrina and Paolo Lobregat

mamETTA Santos

MINDY Velasco with Cricketa, Katrina Lobregat, Quito Lopez, Bea Tarasco and Kris Lopez

ASYA of Boracay owners Marites Educo and husband Chris Cuizon

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Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

SELECTA Gold SERIES
Mixed Exclusively For You
freshly baked brownies are mixed with decadent hazelnut ice cream to become a wickedly delicious experience, thanks to Chelsea Market's Chef Sau del Rosario.
Selecta Gold Series. Created exclusively for you.

Text and photos by Alice Y. Vergara

All that glitters here is pure gold

SINCE NOT A FEW gleaming skyscrapers along Sheik Zayed Road, that stretch of freeway that connects Dubai to major towns and cities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), are barely a decade old, one wonders how the city's older inhabitants used to cool themselves once desert temperatures soared to as high as 45°C in summer.

The answers can be found in Bastakiya, a complex of old, low-rise buildings and courtyards in that Dubai that dates back to the late 19th century. Refurbished and turned into museums, galleries and cafés, Bastakiya is one of several routes (and free-(b)ogging) reminders of Dubai's humble beginnings.

Made primarily of hardened desert sand, each of Bastakiya's structures has a wind tower with huge wooden poles jutting out from it. The poles are actually pipes that used to collect wind, which, in turn, was funneled inside rich people's homes to generate ventilation.

Otherwise, most of Dubai's earlier inhabitants lived mostly in tents and earned a living by herding camels, trading goods and diving for pearls. (The coastal city is one of seven emirates that make up UAE.)

The discovery of oil in the mid-'60s began to change all that as Dubai's economy developed rapidly. But its oil reserves are quite modest next to neighboring Saudi Arabia's and Abu Dhabi's.

DESERT safari culminates in dinner and a camel ride near a campsite.

ONE OF MANY stores at the gold souk selling gold jewelry in every imaginable shape and style

Why Dubai is a tourist and shopping hub like no other

SUVs take riders on "dune-bashing" adventures in the Arabian Desert.

In a nutshell

ZAHED OMAR, one of Gulf Weekend's anti-adversity and multilingual writers

IS ALCOHOL SERVED IN Dubai? Can I wear my two-piece bikini to the beach without getting hauled off to jail? Does my wife have to cover her head the entire time we're there? Is it difficult to get there? How hot does it get?

These and more are some of the most common questions would-be tourists ask about the "City of Gold." Based on a fact sheet issued by the city's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, Dubai can be reached and is accessible in most Asian and Western cities.

+ Emirates, the United Arab Emirates' flag carrier, flies non-stop from Manila to Dubai and vice versa 12 times a week.

+ The flight from Manila to Dubai via its own, gleaming Terminal 3 airport is approximately nine hours. The city is four hours behind Manila.

+ Yes, you can have your wine and drink it too. Alcohol is available in certain restaurants and bars and in most hotels and members-only establishments catering to foreigners.

+ But drinking in public (outside exempted establishments) is against the law. Bars and clubs are closed on certain days of the year in observance of religious and national holidays.

+ Gamblers, however, are forced to take their money elsewhere. All forms of gambling in Dubai are banned.

+ Dubai, unlike most Muslim cities, is quite liberal and is home to an overwhelming number of expatriates from close to 100 countries.

+ Swimming trunks and two-piece bathing suits are quite acceptable at the pool or at the beach. Dubai, especially the Jebel's complex at Palm Jumeirah, offers a number of water attractions like Wild Wadi for the young and young-at-heart.

+ Women may wear sleeveless shirts, as long as it doesn't cause undue attention.

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Captivating Cagbalite

The next strip of virgin beach for vacationers lies off Mauban, Quezon

FREEBIES FUN. Ma-ing surfing waves here, and tropical-like scenery, makes Ta-ke...

By Gibbs Cadiz

CAGBALITE OR CAGBALITE? I'm not sure. The folks at Pamocnoc Beach Resort where we stayed spelled it each as "c." Lots of online sites also spell it that way. Google, however, prompts you with the "b" version. And even our photogenic pilot-friend Isacc—native of Mauban, Quezon, the nearest jump-off point to the island—pronounced it with a "b" in his photo tribute to the place.

Whatever the right spelling, Cagbalite Island (?!) got me the one with the "c") might need to get its name right soon, because I have a feeling it's about to get big in a few years. Right now it's still a relatively unspoiled, serene and rustic place. But words in the bodies of city folks tired of the now-congested, otherwise overstretched Puerto Galera and look for the next virgin strip of beach to descend on.

Accessible

I hope the people of Cagbalite will take a tougher stand when it comes to protecting their piece of paradise. Not every beach needs to have a disco bar or a Hooters celebrity volleyball circus.

The island's lure, aside from its clear waters and pristine state, is its accessibility. Mauban is only about four hours' drive from Manila. From the Mauban pier, it takes 45 minutes to reach Cagbalite by boat.

The one we rode to didn't inspire much confidence: small and cramped, it was also packed with about 30 passengers plus provisions for the island—crates of softdrinks and beer, sacks of rice, large blocks of ice. The ride, though, was smooth—the waters were only a little afternoon.

Cagbalite's back-to-basics approach begins with the disembarkation. A large swath of the island's coastline is shallow; the boat can't make it all the way to the shore, so at one point, passengers are divided into small groups and transferred to a flat-bed that would bring them closer to the beach.

But will not all the way. It's a tiny bit, like the time we arrived (around 10:30 a.m.), visitors would have to walk on an ankle-deep water and exposed sand for about 5-10 more minutes before reaching the resort. We didn't mind, even if it was scorching hot. The rough beginnings were only a prelude to a different island experience.

LARGELY unspoiled, serene, rustic. May it stay that way.

Heavenly

The accommodations, too, are nowhere near the modern conveniences of mainstream beaches. At Pamocnoc, we stayed in a nipa hut with ropes windows and a roomy floor. The tub was that at least one of us always had to stay behind to guard our stuff. The good part was, we slept for the breeze from the cooking, unfiltered by the air-borne. Heavenly.

Because there was obviously only front on to renovate, we had to dress our paraphernalia like laptops and/or music speakers, allowing us greater time to bond over mostly beans and great food. Steamfish steaks in Cagbalite, but if you're in a place like this, why bother with Facebook and blogging?

(We did record a podcast, which sounds unforgiving and the occasional fan whizzed by as our mode library we jump up in bright every time.)

The food was a surprise. For our package of P700 a day for three meals and two swimming, what we were served was extraordinary. Our first lunch consisted of two servings of spicy pork, two plates of three salad and a huge tuna steak—only fresh—that we weren't able to finish.

The rest of the meals were just as good, if a bit slow at serving. Beer was P80, a large bottle of Coke Zero P60. Some other visitors brought food and cooked their own food.

Cagbalite isn't for sleepers reluctant to socialize. Perhaps some other part of the island is, but others we stayed, the sun that scorched before you saw that was shallow at low tide, you would walk the no glistening, newly tapered sand. But when the tide returns, the waters come to almost a stone's throw away from the cottages. Imagine waking to the cool breeze and the gentle sound of the waters breaking around.

By big surfing waves here, and ocean-like or banana boats, either. So far, I hope it stays that way—quiet, relaxed, simple.

THE ISLAND is only 45 minutes away by boat from Mauban, Quezon.

The service of us ensured for three days and two nights. The cost looking group at a nearby hut got drunk and noisy on the second night, arguing over movie trivia until about two a.m. That was the only instance—a negligible one—in an otherwise extremely enjoyable and relaxing getaway. One to-tal damage: P12,000 each.

Surplus

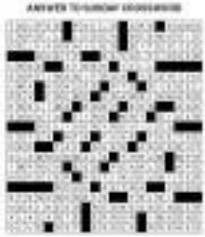
Going home served up a last surprise. The boat that took passengers back to Mauban was on the other side of the island. We had to walk through a trail, then past a large village of concrete houses. Basketball courts and apricot seems that you wouldn't have existed unless you got out of the secluded resort.

The name of the town's congregation attained every basketball court. After the installed, drama like—allowed by Cagbalite, that change right brought our cooking back to earth.

There is always the island, though—the sand, the sea and all accessory of them. They're more than good enough to hold us in the meantime.

This piece first appeared in the author's blog, www.gibbscadiz.com. E-mail gcadiz@yahoo.com.ph.

ANSWER TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD



Mandy Navasero holds Batanes photo workshop

Mandy Navasero Baldoza-Pinlac (who is also Ed Alday's and Mae Ivy's Navasero graduated from Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara, California, USA, with a degree in Illustration and Advertising Photography. She has been holding her highly successful photo safari there

1602. E-mail: mandy@navaserobaldoza.com or call 09197167. Magnolia is her partner travel agency, Pinlac Travel and Tours, Inc. 3/F Metro Manor, 2210 Leon Guinto St., Malate (Manila). e-mail: tours@e-mail.com.ph or call 5260303.

Tropical sanctuary in Bicol

Built on a private, pristine island along the southern tip of Caramoan Island in Albay is the Rawis Mission Site, a luxury island playground located in scenic Bicol and ready to cater to this. One discovers a tropical sanctuary this side of the Bicol peninsula, where indulgence in a private address is desired by many discerning and affluent travelers. The resort blends contemporary architecture with its beautiful and charming surroundings. Painted in white to stay, special touches begin and before guests arrive. Each of which is designed with high-ceiling cabanas, large terraces, sun decks and sea-level access to the beach or the pool. Bamboo-paneled walls or

TRAVEL BRIEFS

AT TINAGA. Classes in Sabang, photography students have fun with colored sheets.

Quota Int'l holds fundraiser for hearing-impaired kids

THE QUOTA INTERNATIONAL OF TAGBAY in Cebu held a royal pageant to crown the 2009 King and Queen of Hearts, celebrated with a colorful masquerade theme. Its president, Juan Hermes Chiongbian, said the festivity culminated this year's fundraising project for the hearing-impaired children in Talisay's Tabunok public school.

Pageant winners were Ramon Mio Siguera and Jeanne Hailey Gaerlan. Runners-up were Anthony Chang and Amanda Clement. Ladies of the court were Jun Mendoreo, Christine Lim, Alexandra Colmenares, Vanessa Li, Stephanie Tinch, Angela Alonzo and Christine Jerald. Among the lords were Hans Elbo and Hiroto Ishimitsu.

Queen's Mother was Margaret Rosemarie Green who came from England just for the event. She was crowned by acting Cebu City Mayor Michael Rama and Juan Miguel Hotel, Tagbay Quotarian and secretary/treasurer of Quota District 43, which covers the Philippines. Escort was her son David Green, who lives in Cebu with his Filipino wife and children.

Cebu will see a lot of Quota activities in the coming weeks. A national convention is scheduled at Mactan Island on April 23-25, with 200 delegates confirming attendance.

"There'll be room for everyone," says Quotarian Coronation, overall chairperson. She belongs to the Cebu Quota and is ably assisted by current president, Loreta Calderon, as well as VP Jocelyn Pesquera.

Women power

Quota District 43 Governor Luisa "Lui" Ilcisco came from Manila and gave the club's namesake. The first service club to harness women power, it was founded in 1919 by Wanda Frey Jones in Buffalo, New York. Ninety years later, it has chapters all over the world, some of them with male members.

Quota's first club in the Philippines was put up in Manila in 1976. The Cebu club followed in 1977 with Lydia Pinlac as its first president. She remains one of the most active members to this day, and serves as adviser.

"There are some 15 Quota clubs in the Philippines. Five of them are in Manila: Manila South, Alabang, Las Piñas and Parañaque. There are also five here: Cebu, Metro Cebu, Mandaue, Talisay and Lapu-Lapu. The rest of the five are in Iloilo (since 1977), Bacolod, Davao, Pampanga and Legazpi.

Lin Libon exhorted all to follow the motto of Quota international president Teddy Silliman: "Give a gift of Quota," Lin explains. "Give of yourself."

Miss Silliman is expected in Cebu for the convention, along with executive director Kathleen Twiley, who will handle leadership

CEBU CEBU

Jaime Pisonell

seminars on the first day of the confab. Also expected are South Pacific director Sheila Pritchard, based in Australia, and District 41 Lt. Governor Carolina Find.

Sessions will be conducive to camaraderie, but games have been invited to the outside for three consecutive nights. On April 23, the opening ceremonies will be at 6:30 p.m. at the City Sports Club Cebu, which is right across the Mactan.

On April 24, the action moves to the main hall of the Cebu Provincial Capitol for an evening of Broadway excerpts. It is actually a contest, so you can imagine all the efforts that have gone into research and rehearsals, not to mention the costumes.

QUEEN Hosier Margaret Rosemarie Green, crowned in Cebu City acting Mayor Mike Rama and Joan Marie Fuscet

The Governor's Ball on April 25 will be a formal occasion at the ballroom of the Marriott Hotel. Julius Augusto Zobel de Ayala has been invited to be the guest of honor and keynote speaker.

On May 2, Cebu Quota will have its annual Symposium, announced chairperson Ms. Luisa Veloso and Connie Garcia. It is scheduled for the club's projects for the hearing-impaired, day care centers and many other charitable endeavors.

Quota Cebu's Anniversary 2009 starts with a Mass at 4 p.m. at the Peñalosa de San Carlos in Mabolo. The procession of colorful "saya" and pretty "sagalas" will follow, all the way to the Cebu Grand Convention Center for the coronation rites, dinner and dancing.

Boy Ilganay will be Isabel Garcia as Reina Tungawanin, Edee Claire Reina del Amanecer, Agnes Pearrel, Reina Elena, crowned by last year Tyler James Bastrel as Emperador Constantino, Rico Saut Jose, Reina de las Flores, and Anne Maida Villanueva, Reina de los Angeles.

On May 16, as the saint-owner will be the Festival of Flowers. It is also a fundraiser, that date for the Queen of Metro Cebu, headed by Josephine Maputo. Dr. Pamela Jean Yanombo will be crowned Queen of Flowers surrounded by a bevy of princesses and their princes.

RAMON Mio Siguera and Jeanne Hailey Gaerlan, King and Queen of Hearts

Mandy Navasero ...

From page D2

the world's exotic spices. Bay fronts caught seafood, cooked to perfection at the De La Playa Restaurant. Call 88880223 local 2086/2087, e-mail reservations@manila.crowneplaza.com, or visit www.cebu.manilabay.com.

Club Punta Fuego's new rooms

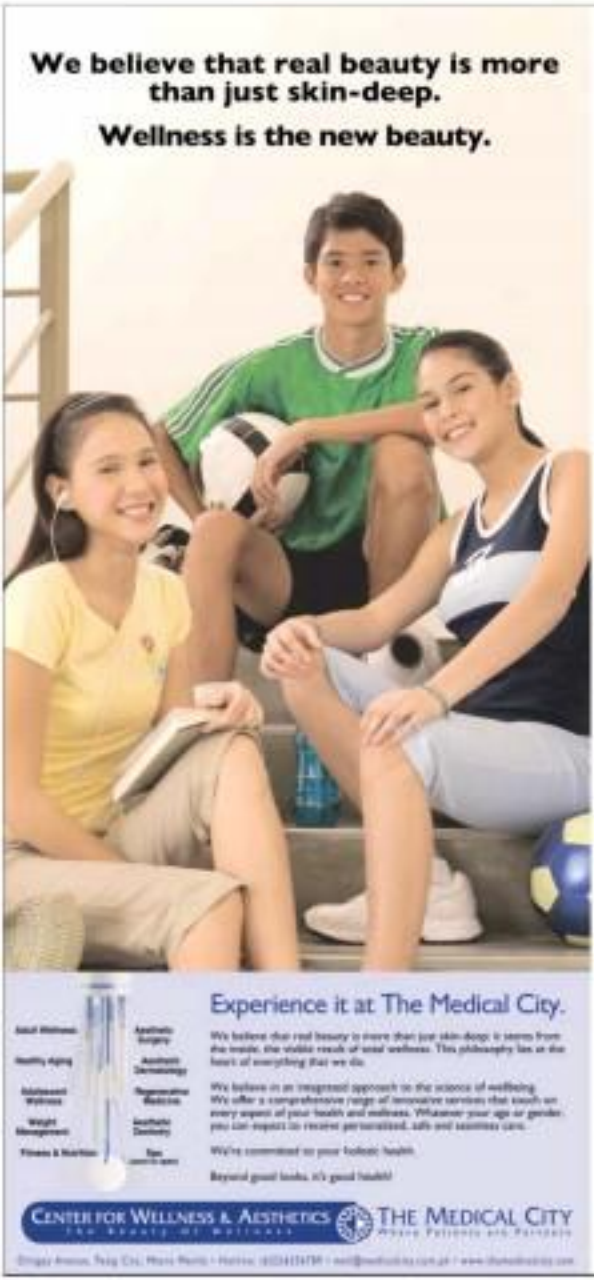
Club Punta Fuego marks its 10th year with 16 new rooms soon to rise over the sunset-side cove looking the signature infinity pool and the South China Sea — suites of more modest proportions but no less cozy compared to the current 33 Estilos. Equipped with a yacht club, two dining outlets, executive golf course, two swimming pools, meeting rooms and an extensive array of recreational facilities, the pala-bonet rooms will enable the Club to accommodate more members, as well as their families and friends, especially during long weekends and holidays. Call 757-4525 to 27 or visit www.clubpuntafuego.com.ph.

Family excursion at Golden Sunset

This summer, families are planning on exploring exciting haunts like Golden Sunset Village Resort and Spa in Calatagan, Batangas. Just a two-hour drive from Makati, Golden Sunset assures families and groups of a fun-filled summer excursion. Moms and grandmas can enjoy massages and other beauty treatments at Serendipity Spa, dad can play a game of billiards or volleyball with the boys or in the sandbar "resort" provided by lush gardens, while kids can frolic in the bigger-than-Olympic size pool and water slides, have fun entertaining spaces at the Butterfly Farm, or have an interesting history lesson at the Outdoor Museum Gallery. A new kiddie pool is sure to attract every kid's swimming fancies. A multi-purpose hall that can serve family gather-ings and trips up to 300 to 350 heads is great for birthday parties, baptisms, weddings and the like. Honeymoons who are feeling extra romantic can live off to the new honeymoon suite made especially with them in mind. A cabana is also available for them to have a romantic sunset dinner together. Two units of two-bedroom family suites are also now available for large families of up to 16 people per suite. Garden Sunset has 75 rooms which can accommodate 1,00 people, plus a function which can house 40 guests. Call 6397 681 or 6343 109.

New apartments in Boracay

The 72-room Boracay Subic is the island's newest accommodation on Bulabog Beach, a place for sports enthusiasts and beach lovers. Call 036-3503434 or 718 1666.



All that glitters here is pure gold

From page B1

Arabia, and Dubai's founding fathers knew this.

Mideast center

Barely a generation later, under the leadership of Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE's conservative vice president and prime minister, Dubai's economy has been diversified. Thanks to overseas labor, it has become, in less than two decades, a Mideast hub with thriving manufacturing, finance, IT, retail and tourism sectors.

Thus, it's not uncommon to bump into a smiling Arabahyan, for it is one of Dubai's iconic hotels or humongous shopping malls, as Filipinos are among the biggest groups of "guest" workers (most only perpetuate) in Dubai.

Nestled along the scenic side of Dubai Creek, a scenic seaway inlet that divides the city into two, Bur Dubai is Dubai's heritage site and the first stop in our three-day whirlwind tour of the bustling metropolis organized and sponsored by the Dubai government and Emirates, Dubai airport's newly opened Terminal 3, built for the flag carrier's dedicated use, is an attraction in itself.

Dubbed as "Keep Discovering Dubai," the tourism campaign aims to introduce (and reintroduce) Dubai to as many as 5,000 foreign tour operators and journalists.

With an economy integrated with the rest of the world, Dubai, especially its tourism industry, hasn't been spared from the effects of the global financial crisis. With tourism and related industries making up as much as 32 percent of Dubai's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008, it's easy to understand why its government has been so many proactive moves.

Shopping

Shopping mad Filipinos won't run out of options in Dubai. In city (more vast) stir many from Bur Dubai, somewhere across the Creek, is Deira Dubai, a traditional shopping district where the city's famed gold and spice souks (markets) are.

Since Friday is a holy day in the Islamic world, it's best to schedule your trip to these open-air markets another day. Otherwise, apart from facing up with the rest of humanity in found an alley, you'd have to wait longer as shops open much later on Fridays.

The gold souk is a dizzying Arab-style strip mall composed of hundreds of small shops that sell—you guessed it—gold jewelry in every imaginable weight, make, color and design (from traditional styles to more modern and less ornate Italian-inspired pieces).

They don't call Dubai the "City of Gold" for nothing. Reportedly, no shop sells anything below 15 karats, and prices are pegged to prevailing international rates.

The degree of difficulty that went into making certain pieces accounts for the dizzy prices in place. Since not a few stores tend to overprice, it's best to haggle by as much as 40 to 50 percent.

Should such a strategy fail, you can always leave, as there are other designs and other stores along the strip that are more eager to part with their merchandise. Certain stores also offer pearls, diamonds and silver pieces.

If jewelry isn't your thing, you might want to scour the place for Arabic coffee pots, silver and brass swords, ancient rifles, shisha (water pipes), porcelain prayer beads, brass trinkets, Persian carpets, souvenir furniture and other souvenir items.

Exotic

The nearby spice souk is also a feast for the senses, as various exotic and familiar aromas conspire for your attention. Huge sacks containing all sorts of spices from the Middle East as well as dried fish, incense and flowers line dimly lit walkways.

For more "traditional" shoppers, Dubai, like Metro Manila, is also a city of malls. Two of its biggest and most famous shopping hubs are the Emirates Mall and the still-to-be-completed Dubai Mall.

Dubai Mall is the bigger mall, with one of the world's biggest indoor aquariums, but the smaller Emirates Mall boasts an indoor ski park, with cable cars and "real," albeit artificially produced, snow.

Snow in a desert city? A hotel inspired by a giant sailboat? A series of man-made resort islands that form the shape of a palm tree? All of these and more can be found only in Dubai.

The city is also proving to be a mecca of brands and raging trends, from designers to high-street labels. The best months to shop are during the annual Dubai Shopping Festival and Dubai Summer Surprises.

Until January and June to August, respectively, both events offer shoppers huge discounts, freebies and mind-blowing raffle prizes.

Finally, a trip to Dubai won't be complete without going on a desert safari. The real-hot slopes of reddish Arabian Desert with the setting sun as backdrop are simply too breathtaking to miss. Gulf Ventures (www.gulfventures.ae) is one of several companies offering "dune-bashing" adventures on reinforced 4x4s.

Humor

Apart from being well-trained, drivers/tour guides, like Fahed Fahid, are articulate and well-traveled. What's more, they never seem to run out of jokes. Indeed, it's there's one thing Arabs and Filipinos have in common, it's their innate ability to readily poke fun at others and themselves.

Drivers pick us up at a designated spot in the early afternoon. The trip at concrete roads to Sharjah, the first and last stop before the fun begins, takes about an hour. The driver uses the opportunity to deflate stereotypes about the Arabs and to debunk misconceptions about Dubai.

From there on, the all-minute trip turns into a virtual roller coaster ride, albeit a tamer one, as the SUV cruises on endless waves of dunes with varying peaks and valleys. This ride is definitely not for the pregnant and elderly and those with bad backs.

But the sudden twists, turns and slips are nothing compared to the dreamlike trance one is bound to experience while staring at the desert with its surreal beauty and mind-boggling enormity.

After a brief stop at a camel farm, the trip culminates in a campsite with a notice of open zone serving a buffet of barbecued dishes. Dinner usually ends with a belly dance meeting guests to share the limelight with him.

While waiting for dinner, guests can while the time away riding camels or sand boarding. The less intrepid can get henna tattoos or indulge themselves in endless cups of Arabian coffee or dishes sesame. Like in most of Dubai's bigger hotels, alcohol is also served.

Gulf Ventures also offers overnight packages, which include breakfast.

While nothing but the wind for an iPod and countless stars for a blanket should they opt to sleep outside those areas, guests can experience, if only for a night, how life in old Arabia once was.

Emirates flies 22 times a week from Manila to Dubai, and vice versa.

Sixty Years of Ice Cream Innovations

Sixty years ago, before Selecta Ice Cream sold its first scoop of authentic flavors, it dreamed, chased a vision, and it followed its heart to become the Ice Cream innovator, serving only the best ice cream creations in the country.

And six decades after, Selecta has continuously reinvented the ice cream industry through its world-class innovations, making them ahead over its competitors.

Today, it is very well-known for its signature flavors, from its Queso Real that has loads of quality cheddar cheese in vanilla ice cream mixed with pure coconut cream to add Pinoy twist to its taste; Coffee Crumble that is infused with the full-bodied flavor of freshly brewed Monk's Blend Coffee—a fusion of Arabica and Robusta coffee beans grown by monks in the hills of Bukidnon; down to its Cookies and Cream, a flavor which was first introduced by Selecta to the Philippines from the United States.

With chunks of dark chocolate cookies stuffed with silky vanilla cream filling, Cookies and Cream became an instant hit to local ice cream lovers, making more people happy with this new pleasure food.

More Flavs, More Happiness

True to its vision of adding life to Filipino taste buds, Selecta sees to it that it chooses only the finest ingredients for its ice cream and the finest gimmicks for the delight of its customers.

Constantly creating breakthroughs, it was the first to offer Double Dutch and Very Rocky Road on an ice cream stick format. It has also advocated the creation of family bonding moments through eating ice cream.

With such stream of thought, Selecta came out with multiple flavors in a pack like new 3-in-1+1, which is the first ice cream pack that offers four flavors; and its very famous Family Pack.

With this strategic form of packaging ice cream, Selecta has achieved its purpose of creating familial memories that come with the secret of having a popular treat on the table ice cream!

A pioneer for its many firsts, Selecta's unrelenting quest to advance itself through its innovations has reached another level.

This year, it has upgraded even farther and farther its quality taste and rich flavor by being the first to collaborate with Manila's top chefs to create premium ice cream with its latest offering-the Selecta Gold Series.

By creating new and exciting flavors, Selecta has definitely become synonymous with innovations and celebrations.

For sixty years now, it has become the ice cream company that has significantly etched a memory in the minds of the Filipino people.

Indeed, for every scoop, for every new flavor and twist, Selecta has undoubtedly engaged its heart to create only the best ice cream experience that is specially crafted for the enjoyment of its no. 1 consumers-the Filipino families-the loyal patrons who have made Selecta's dream of becoming the No. 1 Ice Cream ng Bayan come to life.

In a nutshell

From page D1

Inclusive tour "crowding."

- But when not shopping or sightseeing, remember advised to cover their shoulders and wear longer skirts or trousers, especially during the holy month of Ramadan. Wearing a veil is optional.
- Men should always wear a shirt or top beyond the beach or swimming pool.
- Dubai's official currency is the dirham or AED. In current value it 3.6 dirhams to US$1. Put another way, 1 dirham is roughly equivalent to P13.
- Although temperatures could soar up to 47°C during the summer (May to October), Dubai's major shopping malls and hotels such as Burj Al Arab, Atlantis and Wonderland are air-conditioned.
- For those out to escape the heat, the best time to visit the city is from November to April. Blessed with mild winters, the desert city's weather is at its most pleasant during these months.
- Banks or traditional hole-in-the-wall money changers are open late on Fridays, a holy day in the Islamic world. Sunday, not Monday, marks the start of the week and stores business their usual traffic on that day.
- Preaching of religion is allowed in Dubai. The city has a number of Christian churches where most Filipinos congregate on certain days. —Alec F. Ferguera

Sunday LIFESTYLE

IN THIS ISSUE
Captivating Cagbalite /D2

Fashion stylist loses job over bag

FASHION styling may seem to be one of the coolest jobs today but it has a pitfall—the constant temptation to misplace—okay, keep—the luxury items you easily get your hands on.

The daughter of a celebrity was reportedly indicted from her publicity job for this reason.

The newbie stylist tagged along during an out-of-town shoot and, evidently, went home with one of the bags from the shoot. She even posted photos on Facebook.

The bag had a bracelet in it—all so no loss from the store.

National Artists in June

After a lull of three years, National Artists will be proclaimed in June.

Deliberations have already begun. The nominees have been short-listed.

What is commendable about the selection of National Artists the past few years is how both Cultural Center of the Philippines and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts have adhered strictly to the selection process. It begins with a democratic base of possible nominees from which a short list is made. Then the deliberations get more thorough, the composition of deliberating

TUESDAY 24

Artists portray vibrant colors of summer

TESSA! TESSA PRIETO-TOLEDO

ALL THE COLORS OF SUMMER! From the white, hot sands in Isaw of Discovery Shores Boracay and the explosive, colorful hues on the paintings of **Lenie Iguanzo**, to the cool, green grass on the lawn of Inventure in Bohol, and the vibrancy, elegant pastels on the canvases of **Marivic Bulfon**, summer is all about color.

Multifaceted Marivic Bulfon has been expressing her passion through painting for almost two decades and has had several ex-

hibits at The Peninsula Manila. Her art is her emotion unleashed.

Her recent exhibit was "Retrato" Dreamscapes, jointly launched with a poetry book she illustrated, by National Artist for Literature **Virgilio Almario**. Scenes of dance included

ARTISTS C2

COME, RELEASE YOUR PASSIONS

Experience a celebration of discovery, creativity, and learning that can't be found anywhere else.

From April 25 to May 30, we've invited lovers of the arts, music, and active play to inspire and enthrall all passionate minds.

Come join us and find your true passions in Passionfest at Bonifacio Global City.

PASSIONFEST at BGC
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Bonifacio
Home of passionate minds

BIRTH Louie's friends Raul Mitra, Regine Velasquez and sister Carol Y. Mitra

TALENTED couple Apoy and Prance Laurel

COOL mom Tessie Tomas with son Robin

FLOW Magazine readers Marcel Crespo, Aga and Charlene Muhlach

FLOW Magazine artistic group Cloudern Ricky Toledo and Boo Vital

NAMMY and Vicky Ballon; "Remanso" poet Virgilio S. Almario, National Artist for Literature; "Remanso" artist Melvin Ballon; BR Ballon Lim and Michelle Lim

Artists portray vibrant co

National Artist for Sculpture Napoleon V. Abueva, National Artist for Visual Arts Antonio Lee, Supreme Court Justice Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, Mayor Alfredo Lim, and Fabrician Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil.

A dispute of opening orders symbolizes now life and her love of flowing water. Beyond the canvas, Montero also produced three-dimensional pieces like furniture and bags, as well as T-shirts and totes, all with Mon's signature strokes.

Another artist whose palette explodes with colors and emotions is Louie Ignacio. Usually found behind one of IBM Network's cameras, albeit Louie recently staged his First One-Man Exhibit in Artesia Gallery at SM Megamall. His striking canvases are compositings of his soul-lifting that come when he dreams and his imagination flies. He must dream alike because the male solons of his headscapes, landscapes and nature are in bright and happy.

I met Louie during my stint on "Celebrity Duets," where I was amazed at his ability to find my better angles and mask my croaky singing. So I was happy to be the host at his painting debut. Guests included our IBM boss, Wilma Galvante, his executive EMA family and Efrain Yap-Dy.

Photographs, just like canvases, are such an artistic means of capturing the beauty of the world. Renowned photographer Alex "Alex Hagure recently showcased his stunning images of the La Mesa Watershed. Several of the photos were part of the exhibit "Sun Hagure & Van Hagure: Reflects in Art Part 2" at The Peninsula Manila hotel. The exhibit featured not only Alex's striking photographs but also the exquisite copper etchings by his brother, Han.

UNIQUE friends Bebe Gumbaynhart, Ricky Toledo, Sea Princess, Chito Vijandre and Bongz Manalac

THE BIG Oxsim Sale organizer Joan Fernando and newly-wed Ram Bank

NOBIA family Sandeep Khanna, Nikka Abes, CEO William Hamilton-Whyte and Establishment's Armie San Diego

EXHIBITING artist Louie Ignacio with pieces of honor Wilma Galvante, Elvira Yap Go, and his mom Fe Lagdameo Ignacio

CELEBRITY artist Louie Ignacio with his art exhibit pieces at Artesia Gallery

UNFORGETTABLE ladies Eric Jaojo, Astrid Crisologo and Gemma Suaco

GORGEOUS ladies Sari Carrasco, Mayumi Carmona and Marlene Elizalde

Nokia's stunning images of the lens and lenses of La Mesa were captured using two phones, Nokia's five-megapixel, Carl Zeiss optics-equipped N96 and N95. The shots is a few words worth more than the thousand words a picture is proverbially worth.

Nokia's Takeback Campaign

As the world's leading mobile phone supplier, Nokia understands it is important to lead the way in environmental sustainability and demonstrate best practices. Nokia's Takeback Campaign focuses on the recovery of old mobile phones, batteries and accessories.

For every kilo of old phone material collected of any brand of phone, Nokia will make a donation to Bantay Kalikasan for the continued rehabilitation of La Mesa Watershed. Nokia's ad-

LOVELY ladies Fe Rodriguez and Toni Abad

DISCOVER

Take a journey around BGC and be amazed with the city's many sights and sounds. Discover the public art pieces with Carlos Celdran. Discover the ins and outs of the city in the BGC Alleycat race.

City Art Tour — April 25, 4:30 PM
For seat reservations, please text 0927 8421 166
Assembly time is at 4 PM at 9th Avenue, Bonifacio High Street (near Nine)

2nd BGC Alleycat Race — May 10, 7 AM
Registration at 5:30 AM in Bonifacio High Street near R.O.X.
(Pre-register at R.O.X., Bonifacio High Street by May 9)

PASSIONFEST at BGC
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Suarez, Kristine Icasas, Miguel Rosales, Chito Vijandre, Patrick Aparicio.

NATIONAL Artist for Sculpture Napoleon V. Abueva with "Resistance" artist Rodolfo Rallos in front of their "Kaalikasan Dream" screen divider

NATIONAL Artist for Visual Arts Arturo Luz, Marivic Rallos, Tessie Luz, Baron Patrick de Roongpanyo and son David

lors of summer

From page G1

POET-TRANSLATOR Marra Gluera, Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, Mrs. National Artist for Literature and "Romancero" poet Virgilio S. Almario (Rio Alma)

FLOW Magazine artists Marivan Crisologo and Ronald Ventura

STYLISH couple Gilo and Sabina Borella

DOMINATING brothers Ken and Alex Vicencio with Sea Princess

INQUIRER'S Maurice Arcache, Mini Lopez and Hollie Alonso

INQUIRER'S Bambi Harper, Wig Serrano and Evelyn Farina

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CREATE

Unlock your child's imagination at the Kids Camp. Test your creative eye in the digital field at the Vision Digital Open.

KIDS CAMP (Sessions are at the Activity Area, 2/F, near Starbucks)

Cooking for Kids with Margarita Forés	May 16, 4 PM
Bag Design & Fashion Sketching with Anna-Aurea Atalan	May 17, 4 PM
Tie-Die & Face Paints sponsored by Hobbes & Landes	May 23, 4 PM
Carton Craft Workshop sponsored by Toto Pot	May 24, 4 PM
Cooking for Kids sponsored by The Stock Market	May 24, 4 PM

Pre-registration: May 1 – 24, 2009 at Hobbes & Landes and The Stock Market
Open registration: on session days of Kids Camp

See author for details.

VISION DIGITAL OPEN

Photo Shoot-out	May 1-10, 2009
Indie Gallery	May 20-30, 2009
Awards Night	May 30, 2009, 6 PM

Prizes totalling to P100,000 await the winners.

For details, visit www.bgcvision.multiply.com

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Fashion stylist loses job...

From page E1

parody more salient.

Of course, lobbying will not go away, also politics. But at least there's considerable consistency.

'Na' of paradise

Time was when only Hawaiians were stolen in Boracay, the island paradise that's now only a congested island.

Last Holy Week, a couple was dining in a resto in the Mall. The woman's bag was slung on the arm of her chair. Then a swarm of boy peddlers—kids, really, who must have been 12 or 13, were 9—descended on their table, grabbed their attention with the wares they were hawking.

For what seemed a long time, the woman didn't eyes were glued to the wares. When she took her eyes off them and fished for the wallet in her bag, she discovered the bag was gone. Classic bag snatching job, really.

But—what makes their experience alarming was, after they went to the police, who didn't even budge to hunt down the hawkers because they were just "kids," they got a call on their mobile from the parents of the kids, threatening them.

The police, the couple hunted, gave their mobile number to the parents of the kids, and the errant they were staying in. Not surprisingly, the couple packed up their bags and flew out pronto. Enough of paradise.

Bag snatching must have been at an all-time high in three last Holy Week break.

Bumper-to-bumper Tagaytay

Compared to Boracay, at least Tagaytay was nearer, so you thought. Of course it is...without traffic.

This Holy Week, however, it was bumper-to-bumper traffic to Tagaytay. One of favorite weekend getaways and quiet to a point village in the cool city indeed found peace and quiet, but only when he recovered himself in his weekend home.

When he had to buy groceries at the grocers, the drive from the resort home took him more than an hour—arithmetically only a 10-minute drive. "Diet Coke has never been so inaccessible," he said of his ordeal. "It's as if I never left Manila."

People hope that Tagaytay wouldn't lose its quaint appeal and charm, if only it could be like Coastal or Monterey to the US—coasting, yet with a small-town feel.

Otherwise, one look at those garish hotspots—those docks of weekend-only malls...and you could forget Coastal. Why do local politicians have this thing for lofty frontpieces?

Summer workshops at Tribeca

Tribeca offers various workshops at The Clubhouse of Tribeca Private Residences. Mark Rivera and Vincent Jayme will show why ballerinas is a great way to build discipline. Ballet Universal Dance and Fitness Studio will offer lessons on hip-hop, rhythmic gymnastics and social ballroom; Batch 2 begins week of May 11. Sign up by May 9. Summer will not be complete without swimming classes for kids ages 6-17 and adults 18 and up. Bert Lozada will teach swimming the safe and fun way. Fiesta Aerobicsdance® other yoga classes for kids starting May 6. Sign up by May 4. Call Luisa Abat at 842-4000 and 0917-8021392.

Writing workshop

The Writing Section, a private writing workshop for adults and teens, presents its inaugural summer series entitled "A Survival Guide for Freelance Magazine Writers" on May 16, 23 and 30 at G Bistro in Ortigas, Pasig. The workshop covers topics from conducting interviews to marketing your work. Luis Katigbak and Christian Boy Cruz-Ilustre will speak at the event. Early registration is until April 25; the workshop fee until the said date would be at a discounted rate of P3,000. Visit www.thewritingsection.multiply.com or call Mark at 840-5774 and 0918-541 1363.

UP workshops

The UP Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts is conducting Speech and Theater Summer Workshops on April 28-May 14. Call 924-6588/981-8500/4540.

CELEBRATE

Immerse yourself in an evening of music and arts with Ballet Philippines, Tanghalang Pilipino and UP Madrigal Singers at the BGC Arts Festival.

BGC Arts Festival
Activity Area, B2, Bonifacio High Street (near Krispy Kreme)

May 30, 8 PM

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Sunday LIFESTYLE Relationships

When grandma love hits you

By Chit Roces
Contributor

Carlo deserves to be let go by his mom. But me—I'm in a different case

Carlo's first graduation: 14-year-old high school graduation from Sunbury Hall in Pasig, with his "mamita" (left photo); and, above, with some of his fellow graduates

CARLO SAID HIS FIRST GRANDCHILD, turned 30 on Aug. 13, the very same day his mom, Cheryl—my first, and ever-shall-be, daughter-in-law, despite the annulment of her marriage to my son—had her hysterectomy.

It seemed a necessary step—if one were hard put finding some cosmetic sign—for her to finally let go of her young son and send him off to college, in cold Seattle, from idyllic and semi-unplanned Binan, home for them for exactly all his life.

"Mamita," she asked me, "what will I do when he calls me from Seattle and he sounds like he has a bad cold?"

She may have been only joking, but I myself quickly thanked the pious fates there have to forestall: What, indeed, if he had a bad cold?

Doubtless, Carlo is due for liberation. Apart from being of age, he has grown to be a rounded, responsible, until ill to all wholesome young man. He has been smashing surfing in the summer; he plays (but ukes too, guitar and) ukulele, which happens to be the chief family business; he is licensed to drive; and, yes, he has been accepted at the Uni. versity of Seattle's College of Engineering, on partial scholarship.

He deserves to be let go—by his mom.

But me—I'm a different case, a special case, an exception, as are all grandmothers. Grandmothering is a perpetual, free-wheeling business, governed by no rules or procedures or treaties, not even by nationalities.

For keeps

Grandmother and grandchild are bound for keeps. Don't ask me why. It's all to do with nature of grandmotives, and it is affirmed even in the complicated circumstances of my case. Not even my daughter-to-love and son's divorce or their second marriages could take away from it.

When Cheryl decided to leave for the States with Carlo, then only three, and thereby thereafter remarried, my grandma heart broke, not because I thought I would not see him again, but because I knew I would miss out on the wonders of his development.

But I never stopped thinking of him, never stopped writing, never stopped hoping, and I discovered that distance to either time or space was no mythic challenge to grandma love. Not even, in fact, such a formidable and very real deal as my opposite number, Cheryl's mom, who early-enough earned-to-be, Vig Manrita, I cannot be fair."

I recall her rose sitting beside me in silence just outside the delivery room. When my son came out to tell us I knew the baby would have to be delivered by caesarian section, we clasped hands, thus forming, in prayer the partnership between Manrita and Mamarita. A partnership then, no matter how unfair it promised to be, was certain in me to the occasion.

When Carlo was two, for instance, we were partners again, hanging right at the hospital at his bedside therapist. Our bond has become stronger, indeed, with every shared moment.

All the time he was away I wrote... to, hugged Cheryl for updates in pictures. I myself remembered every occasion, even Valentine's Day. That's how I discovered we had another Halloween not Thanksgiving combo. But I was generic "thinking about you" and "missing you" and such feverish cards.

I must have proven my love beyond a doubt, because the grand reward came in May 2004: an invitation to Illinois for his graduation from eighth grade. I flew with my daughter Gia, Carlo's baptismal godmother. My eyes couldn't make it but her husband, Wowo, was there as well to Carlo's stepfather's parents, who had chosen to retire in Maui.

Perfect hostess

Last May, my husband and I took the same flight to Maui with Manrita and Papa to the big graduation from eighth grade. I flew with my daughter Gia, Carlo's baptismal godmother. My eyes couldn't make it but her husband, Wowo, was there as well to Carlo's stepfather's parents, who had chosen to retire in Maui.

Perfect hostess

Last May, my husband and I took the same flight to Maui with Manrita and Papa to the big high school graduation. Cheryl put up the four of us in their beach condominium, where we felt indecently rich sharing the beach with the top-scale Four Seasons and Grand Wailea hotel clientele.

Pure the perfect hostess, Cheryl could not stop apologizing for the vog (volcanic fog) shrouding the mountains. But everything else was perfect. Our lodge was so full we could have lived in earlier for a month. A Benz sat in the garage for Wowo to drive.

The graduation was held outdoors, on the hilltop campus of Sunbury Hall. The vog had lifted for it. Graduation morning was cool, and the sunset is all one with the color of leaves—the greens of the grass and of the foliage of the massive trees, the reds and yellows of the blooms that lined the roads and pathways, the reds between patches of earth here and there, and, of course, the blue of the sky and sea that dominated the whole setting.

The coeducational graduates, about 90 of them, were all dressed in white and barefoot, in the Hawaiian custom of singing grounded and keeping contact (in to Mother Nature. A helicopter raised confetti. Graduates exchanged leis, some until their faces were nearly buried in them.

Just after Carlo had gone back to his seat after his speech, Manrita turned to me, wearing her own lei of carnations, feeling professional.

"Let's go home!" she said, holding very serious. "We've already seen the handsomest guy in the whole bunch. Let's go!"

Such things we don't argue about.

The grandparents—all three sets counting Carlo's stepfather's parents—still happily continue making memories as we tell time and record the inhumanness in his life.

Grandma love hit me at age 58, and I can only wish it on everybody. It is unconditional, it is forever, it is pure. It leaves no room for pride.

Until Carlo, I didn't know that.

Who, really, is Mikaela?

At 13, she ran away from home. At 16, she was sexually abused. In her 20s, she made her fortune. What happened next?

HER NAME IS ALL OVER THESE days—in billboards, glossy spreads and broadcast ads.

Just who is this Mikaela whose Philosophy by Mikaela has surged, seemingly out of nowhere, to rival Vicki Belo as the most aggressive beauty-entrenchment proposition in town?

"Let me make it clear: I'm not in competition with Vicki Belo. Vicki is into surgery. I'm into nonintrusive services," Mikaela Silban chirped matter-of-factly when we met at her nearly two-hour opening with heaven Lifestyle, in which she reveals fascinating—even shocking details—of her life in a manner that would make perhaps even Vicki Belo blush.

Born to an old-wealth family in Bacolod, Mikaela says she was the product of an abusive childhood. She ran away at 13, severed all ties to her immediate family and survived by looking for her keep at an early age. Driven, she used her streetsmart wits and keen entrepreneurial instincts to go into business—exporting South Sea pearls—and, with enough funds, set up her salon.

The business was, she bravely, right along her alley. "I'm very, very vain. Impossibly vain, even when I was a child," she says.

Her obsession with beauty, pampering and wellness struck gold. From a simple salon seven years ago, Philosophy by Mikaela—hyped by the marketing juggernaut it has unleashed—has become a bona-fide star in its field, able to generate its own buzz and attract other stars—the celluloid, celebrity kind—to sing the virtues of its services.

Who is Mikaela the woman behind the brand? Why the instant buzz?

How big is Mikaela now in terms of branches and sales?

We're opening our third branch in Sgt. Esguerra on May 15. We'll have in Alabang and Ortigas. Eventually, in Cebu and Davao.

That's very aggressive. And in the past two years—suddenly there's this Mikaela. Who's the woman behind Mikaela?

Basically I'm into the management of the clinic. The doctors we have are competent, they're board-certified medical, plastic and cosmetic surgeons. We also have dermatologists. I manage the business. I make sure research and development go hand in hand.

You got it up? It was your idea?

Yeah. First the salon, then the clinic.

Your money?

Yes, using the income I made from pearls. I was first, and I still am, supplying pearls—South Sea pearls—to London and the US.

Why this business? Your background?

I'm a Management graduate (*De La Salle*) and I also have a background in Nursing. And I'm very, very vain. Impossibly vain, even when I was a child.

You said you were on your own. Now you have partners?

Yes, just about a month ago. Now we're aggressively pushing because we have nine stockholders aside from me. And we all think there's a future in the business.

Wellness is the new beauty. That is actually what we are working on. We make sure that when you go inside Philosophy by Mikaela, your well-being is taken into consideration, before anything else. You must be checked first if anything and everything.

It's not like, you want a treatment and—boom—you're being swarm-gagayuma. Each individual is unique, so we make sure any treatment is safe for you, considering your allergies, your body structure and everything, with the proper advice we use.

What's your family background?

I grew up in Hacienda, a town in Bacolod. My family came from there. They sold the Silban country—my grandfather was the mayor there, then my granduncle, now my grandaunt. Most schools there are named after Silbans.

In Bacolod, the business system is our lifestyle. There was the sugar boom and like-grow was at its peak. My family owns most of the town.

But when you have a big family—my mom (Benedicta Hacienda) also comes from a very influential family—belong magalo. I believe my mom and dad were spoiled brats. We were four of the family. I'm the eldest. I saw my mom being physically abused by my father. So I grew up seeing that.

Are they still around?

Yeah. But I don't have them with me.

You're estranged now from your siblings?

Yes.

Have you heard from them, since your name has been in media?

I'd like to say I'd want to stay away from people who would hurt me. Basically it's just to keep a peaceful life. I've learned to live my life the way it is now...

What was the root of the estrangement?

My parents separated, my mom was a very strict disciplinarian. Now you'd call it child abuse, then they called it discipline. But I'd go home every day—maybe because of the frustration she had with my father; I don't know, everybody has his reasons—but I would go home every day and get beaten up. I'd have black and blue marks all over my buttocks.

Aray ko!

Oh yes, *aray ko*. *Bisan sa kung anong sitio-an*.

How long have you been estranged from your family?

With my brothers and sisters, it's been an on-and-off thing.

How old were you when you first left the house?

Thirteen. They would find me, then bring me back home and I would still go away.

But how were you able to finish your studies?

I had to work for it. But like I said, they would always be bringing me back. So I would go back to school... Pilo'han.

Gaan ka nanakbay whenever you ran away?

Sa bahay ng driver namin sa Cubao. Yes, from a princess lifestyle to Cubao. I remember I was looking for a job in Makati and I did not have money to go back to Cubao, so I walked from Makati to Cubao. I was in college already.

What was your first job?

Toyota Bel-Air. I faked my resumé. I spoke English very well.

Mukhang good memory of your mother?

Oh well, I have. She used to go to church when I was very young, and very often, like my grandmother. We painted together... she paints. There was a time she hand-painted in my grand aunts' (Roberta S. Benedicto's) house all the tablecloths, and I helped her.

How will you feel when you suddenly see her?

Well I used to bump into her at the supermarket... Mita-mita lang kasi.

She acknowledges you?

No. *Sabi nga niya (while living under cover eh.*

Do you still cry?

Oh yes, I do. That's the most important thing eh, you don't lose feelings. Or else it will make you a bitter nanosecond.

How has this past shaped your business sense, your philosophy?

Well, thank goodness I had a very religious grandmother, who passed away two or three years ago. Her name is Rita Benedicto Gonzalez. I'm so glad I grew up with her, because she instilled in me that through it all, it was faith I could hold on to. *Kasi kung hindi sino na ako kung wala siya.* Hindi ko alam.

You weren't self-destructive or anything? Like drugs?

I could not lie. If I were self-destructive—the only thing I had left was myself.

You said that you were sexually molested. Did you ever tell your mom about it?

No, I was already out of the family when that happened. I was cooking, adding God knows what to my food, when my mother's cousin took advantage of the situation. I was 16. It happened in Bacolod. Nobody understood at the time why I wanted out. There was simply no peace! Everybody was shouting at each other, everybody was violent—my mom and my dad.

When I they already separated at this time?

No, I was still with them. I ran away from my mom, went to my paternal grandparents... *ayun pala sila rin may problema.* It's a very dysfunctional family. The only thing I'm happy I got from my family is, I was taught how to work, to speak. *Kumuha sa mabuti and sa hindi rin*, pabalatkit ni ka. It was very military-style, growing up. The way you ate—at dinner we had to taste a bit of wine. *Sa momento lahat.* Because my grandmother said we needed it when we grew up. I was very thankful for the breeding, which I took with me even when I was out of the family.

Do you still have the dysfunction? How did it manifest?

What I'm amazed about myself is that I can't set borders. *Kasi kung dinidi ka pinagsasamantalahan, dinidi ako i'm sayang.* Fine ang feeling ko. *Kinuha nila ako o nagpa ng mga inuming ko*... Kasi nga wrong umasa sa akin, eh. Pag nandiyan ka sa panahiya ng kasi sa ng *sinong ano

Yes. Eventually I will put up a business that will really be helping a lot of women. Especially women in the province.

You don't have a boyfriend now? Do you have a lover who finances you?

No, no, none. This is all my blood, sweat and tears.

Are you married?

I was married once. But I'm single now. It just didn't work, kasi ako'y sa iisa ko ring life, you go through struggles...

How long did it last?

Months lang.

What? Are you still legally married?

No.

Annulled?

No, annul.

Was the marriage here? In a Filipino?

Yes, here. Yes. It was just months...It wasn't even a big deal.

Among dinamay?

Ahm! Kinalimot.

Ahm! Ka pamato sa sarili?

Ahm! Ah! I was struggling in life, my life. I had my own problem. I think he had to live his life also.

But the father of your son is still around.

Oh yes, he's still around. That's another story. It's a telenovela, I tell you.

Are you dating?

Yes.

Exclusively?

Not yet. Not exclusive.

How old are you?

Thirty-five. Remember, they get scared of me, I don't know why.

What's your advice to women?

For anybody who goes through na ganoon sa life, you get a lot of experience. Mag-bellow ka or ka gang sa bahay nina sa bahay—yung sak of potpot. Bihasa ako sa mga ganoon. Pero ang importante, matuto ng mag-move on at yun. Kasi ako, pinag-dasal ko na yun.

I just believe in God na everything happens for a reason. Make sure you're not dependent on anyone, for the sake of your kids, you self. Set the respect of your husband or your boyfriend. Kasi 'di ba? Lahat ng mga abuse ganoon, sabi pag I grow up seeing that. I don't know, mas respect siyempre once when they also add something on the table. Kasi at da dark, may are more to laughter—we get married, take care of our families, out backbone.

But we women, when you're really too dependent on your husband, what if something happens to your husband?

I used to tell women to be aware of how life is. To love themselves. Because you cannot love your child or somebody else if you don't love yourself.

You can always choose to say "no." That's one of the things we should learn to do.

In the business you're in, how helpful is it to have the story you have?

Life—what I went through, there are lots that scolded me left-right-and-I-am-today—it does not have much effect on my business, but on the way I look at people and train people. I've been through so many hits, but one thing for sure, I will come out a better person.

I'm not where I'd like a lot on or that life is going to throw at me. My story hasn't ended yet.

What is important to me is my faith. My faith has never wavered.

Do you have a Hayden?

Oh my God, no. I don't have a Hayden. I'm so focused on my work.

Do you wish you had a Hayden?

No!

Let me take this moment to say I'm not in competition with Vicki Belo. Vicki is into surgery. I'm into noninvasive services.

But you're appealing to the same group of women who want to look beautiful.

But with safety and ethical aesthetics.

But you have no qualms about putting yourself out there, letting your brand be known.

I'm not selling myself. The company has been there for seven years, and it has already established, by word of mouth, a good standing, even before we came out aggressively this year.

Now, every quarter we find a foundation to what have donate the percent of our income. With so much blessings, we need to share. I have been lucky in so many ways. I think this is where it comes in to play, what I've been through. How it manifests in my business is. But it makes me more helpful, more compassionate.

I can relate to different kinds of people. Whether it's a young person who's trying to find his or her purpose in life or a mature person. And so it takes long-learning-my-story, hindi ma-abuso mangyayari sa 'yo' [makes

What charities has Miguela given to?

Relief Philippines is one. Before I had my own Christmas wish. But with institutional companies it's Relief Philippines more. In the next quarter it will be a Pasig River project for the environment, and for school, women empowerment, entertainment, and culture and arts—because that comes with beauty.

How's your fee prevailing free treatments to 'indigent women'?

I would love to. Because I believe in second chances. People need second chances.

Is your technology FDA-approved?

I make sure they're US FDA-approved. We have doctors and nurses for all our treatments. We're basically a beautiful-safe clinic. We're opening a branch in Makati also, by the way.

What's the risk with this very intensive cellulite-sonic treatment for slimming? Can it hurt your bone?

No. The settings are computerized. Before you undergo treatment you'll have a consultation with a doctor. You're assessed and your body morphology taken—fat notes, artists put lots like lots, etc. There's a computer-generated image. Your whole body outlay is put out.

Do you ever compensate with material things?

I cannot. I have to ear- my son (3 years old) so that if something happens to me today he can survive.

Why stayed in Manhattan? Why not LA, mas-aming Pilipino.

I love New York. It's actually a good time to expand. If you get stuck in crisis, when will you do it? When's the best time to do it? The best time is now. For your life, for anything.

MIGUELA Bilion

courtesy www.glamourmag

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Mary Mediatrix of All Grace church to be built in Lipa City

AN IMAGE OF MARY MEDIATRIX of All Grace in Lipa City was blessed and inaugurated on May 13, 2008.

In a one-and-a-half hectare property in Antipolo del Norte, the place was blessed with 14 rosaries of the Mysteries of the Cross made by Al Gloy. The Virgin Mary statue was sculpted by architect Mahayudin. Even before the parish church is built, Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles has already appointed Fr. Ruben Ilustre parish priest.

Barely a month after he took over as archbishop of Lipa in 2005, Archbishop Arguelles, a devout devotee of Mary, had dreams of building a parish dedicated to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. His dream came true when the prayer park and gardens was blessed by Cardinal Rosales with Lipa Mayor Oscar Gozos, Tanny Dolor and Tenth Serrano de Leon (daughter of Fr. Dolor) instrumental cutting the ribbon.

Lipa apparitions

Sixty-one years after the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three peasants Teresita Castillo in 1948 at the Carmelite monastery in Lipa, devotees continue to go to Lipa to pray in fair, especially on the First Saturday of the month for the 9 a.m. Mass. Even if the Catholic Church has not given official recognition to the apparitions, people come anyway.

The national day of prayer on Sept. 12 draws elevators of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace to Lipa. Businessman Danny Dolor, who faithfully attends Mass in front of the Carmelite monastery, believes in the Lipa apparitions. He himself saw the "dancing sun" in 1994.

Archbishop Arguelles has ordained the building of a parish church in the Virgin's honor at Antipolo del Norte in Lipa.

Easter in New York

My good friend Rose Tiangco e-mailed from New York telling me about the happy Easter Sunday he and his family had there.

"The tulips are blooming on the sidewalks and street islands in Manhattan. After the rains and chill, Easter Sunday in New York was sunny and nippy.

"Everyone was on the sidewalks with cars before us strollers and friendly beautiful dogs sporting most of the people's attention. The Easter Mass at the Historic Parish Church is block away from where I live was helpfully grand as the full choir and the huge pipe organ filled the Gothic church with the stirring Hallelujah chorus from Handel's 'Messiah' being sung."

Divine Mercy

Today being Divine Mercy Sunday, let me share what Jesus said to Sr. Faustina Kowalska (from her diary, 1210): "At three o'clock, implore for My mercy especially for sinners, and if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion, particularly in my abandonment at the moment of agony. This is the hour of My great mercy... At this hour, I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion."

Helping prisoners

Manuel Sioson has been visiting prisons all over the country for the past 20 years, bringing the Word of God and sweaters to prisoners. Next week, he goes to Bagalihan, Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay.

I intervied at how he keeps the faith even if he had been sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. In 1978, he was an engineering student when his world came tumbling down. But he did not lose hope that the truth would come out. The Supreme Court acquitted him of the crimes...leaving Manila Cinema 1, 8 and 10 on July 9, 1978.

In 2008, with meager resources, he put up Mission for Prisoners. With help from some good people, he was able to gather toothpaste, toothbrush-es, canned goods, face towels, medicines and slippers. Even bond paper, envelopes and stamps are needed as prisoners' relatives cloth families.

Please help. Kindly send to Manuel Sioson c/o Cathe Ooh at Prayer Warriors for the Holy Souls at 11st A-1, Darvisi Bldg., 54 Libertad St., Mandaluyong City. Cell: 9111137 or text: 0920-2772840.

St. Expeditus

Cynthia Ibe, first Dmc of Bayanmayan, Bulacan, has gone out of her way to bring St. Expeditus closer to devotees living in Bulacan. Visits Mass today at 9:30 a.m. is at the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Marilao, Bulacan.

Those in Manila can go to St. Andrew Cathedral in La Huerta, Paranaque, for the noon Mass. Fr. Ulysses Cacao is main celebrant. Also in other parts of the country.

Listen to Alex Lacson of the program "San Sapatilos, Ang Simbolong Mahalaga Lapitan" on Radio Veritas, 8-9 p.m., aired Saturday of the month (May 16).

Healing Masses

Fr. Nelson Osorio, OSJ, who hosts Lord's Healing Foundation, will hold healing Masses April 20-24 in Cagayan de Oro and April 26, 3 p.m., San Jose Plaza, San Juan.

2nd Alice Lays Golf Tournament

The Multicare Foundation holds the 2nd Alice Laya Golf Tournament April 24, 8:30 a.m., at Wack Wack Golf and Country Club, to raise funds for projects. With lawyer Greg Beltran as chair, Multicare is involved in the operation of 24 preschools where 734 children in 24 barangays are enrolled. It is also supporting 354 elementary schools and 30 high school students in a joint venture with Isuda led by Fr. Danny Pitis, SJ.

Call 8333632 or text Beltran at 0906-2725581.

LIPA Archbishop Ramon Arguelles and Ambassador Marshall de Pitts

Photo of 4-wire Php 100,000 from Lucky Me! The popular saying "Sa dami-dami ng chance, pwede nyan ka-50-year-old soap-an-boses mong Josephine Alejandro when she gets the surprise of her life upon opening a third pack of Lucky Me! Instant Mami, which she was preparing as breakfast for her kids. Josephine, who has been a loyal Lucky Me! consumer for years, knew about Lucky Me's Pick Lucky Be Happy promo, where you can win instant cash and jackpot prizes. She always hoped that she would win a prize but never imagined that she would actually be one of the grand prize winners. "Thank you so much, Lucky Me! The prize will be very helpful to our family. I will use it for the tuition of my kids and also to set up a sari-sari store where I will sell all kinds of Lucky Me! products," said a tearful Josephine when she claimed her prize. Photo shows Josephine Alejandro (right) accepting her Php100,000 instant prize from Lucky Me! Instant Mami Brand Manager Trisha Cano.

Man claims he's happily married but has girlfriend abroad

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Manuyag

DEAR EMILY,

I am 56, happily married, with a pretty wife who has her own source. We have three children—two recently graduated from medical school, a son is taking up nursing, and a daughter is going into high school.

I have been an OFW in Saudi Arabia for almost 15 years now. My problem is my four-year relationship with a 42-year-old woman who works as sales lady in Bahrain. She has two daughters from a previous marriage.

I've been giving her $300 every month. But I've realized she has been fooling me because she is constantly asking me to buy her a lot of things.

Should I continue my relationship with her?

DEE

Let's define our terms here. You are not happily married. A happily married man doesn't keep a girlfriend or a monthly allowance of $300. You're more like an old fool hoodwinked into this fantasy.

Did you think she really loved you? She used the oldest trick in the book—sex and money—to lure you. Is this your first affair?

You've been lonely after 25 years of living away from your wife and kids, right? How often do you see them? You missed experiencing being a father and the nitty-gritty aspects of their needs. Her birthdays, chicken pores, runny noses, kissing boo-boo elbows, solving difficult homework and listening to their woes like first crush and puppy love—sacrifices you're willing to bear so you can give them a comfortable life.

Did you one day tell yourself it's about time you rewarded yourself with some happiness by having this girlfriend?

If you are truly another now, run as fast and as far away from her.

Change your look. Lose your cell phone. Play dead. Anything to flush her out of your pre.

There are many ways to ruin a lonely heart. Having a foolish girlfriend isn't one of them.

E-mail the author at emanuyag@inquirer.com.ph. Indeed, Lifestyle, or send your letters to Inventure, Log on to www.pinoy.go.ph and listen to Mr. Manuyag co-host the program "Bahkanan Pigilanin," 7:15-8:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, on dzRB 594 AM.

Editor Emerita G. Yulanda

ENTERTAINMENT

Retro Dance Night

ONGOING EVENT TUESDAY TILL MAY 5 in Tesoritas, Greenhills, is "Retro Dance Night" featuring a live band, an aerobics segment with a DJ, and a "first-ever" prize. Guests may bring their own dance instructors. Call 722-4501.

CHEER FACTOR

I CAN SING!

When Gretchen Barretto decided to become a music artist and launched her first album ("Unexpected" – good title) last year, not a few wondered, "Can she, really?" Maybe they can stop wondering now. She recently launched her second CD ("Complicated," spt titrid)

Shutting up Simon

Singing spinster's video viewed by 18 million to date

BLACKBURN, SCOTLAND—SINCE WOWing the judges on the TV show "Britain's Got Talent" last week, Susan Boyle, the frumpy 47-year old consonance who says she's never been kissed, has gained celebrity fame and millions of admirers.

"I did that for my late mother," the unemployed Boyle told The Associated Press at her home in this gritty Scottish village Thursday. "I wanted to show her I could do something with my life."

That she did. She also showed acting at two as the show's smug judges, including Simon Cowell of "American Idol," who was caught on camera making faces while interviewing Boyle before the song.

Launching into "I Dreamed a Dream," from the musical "Les Miserables," Boyle's soaring voice drew startled looks, and then delighted smiles, from the judges. The audience leapt to its feet to applaud her.

More than 11 million people watched the show. A clip of her performance posted on YouTube by the show's producers has drawn nearly 10 million views as of April 17. It has become the most viewed video around the world this month.

AMI TING CU

SUSAN Boyle sings with a backwards accent after home to Blackburn, Scotland

PLDT MYDSL TAKES THE NATION ON OVERDRIVE WITH THE SPEEDSTER BUS!

More and more people are getting broadband-connected as PLDT myDSL goes into Overdrive from Marikina, Quezon City, Kalookan, Nival, Cavite to Pampanga, and soon Speedster will cover Parañaque, Novaliches, Batangas, La Union and Cebu!

The local government was in full support of PLDT myDSL as it goes into Overdrive.

Speed Circuit Car Drifting Exhibition schedule
April 11 – Robinsons Place Lipa, Batangas
April 25 – San Fernando La Union City, Phase
May 1/7 – Sta Cebu

Catch the Speedster Bus in over a hundred Connect Patrol application booths all over the country including Talisay Cebu on April 18, Parañaque on April 25 and Novaliches on May 2.

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

CRANK 2 / R-13
12:55, 3:00, 5:05, 7:10, 9:15

FAST & FURIOUS / R-13
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00

DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION / PG-13
1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:20

I-2 / PG-13
2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

MONSTERS VS. ALIENS / SF
1:00, 4:00, 6:45, 9:10

SEVENTEEN AGAIN / PG-13
12:55, 3:20, 5:45, 8:10

ULTRA CINEMA 7

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE / DRAMA
12:15, 3:40, 6:50, 9:10

WELCOME TO CRYSTAL LAKE
R-18
FRIDAY THE 13TH
2ND WEEK
Bale Entertainment Corporation

POWER PLANT CINEMA

FAST & FURIOUS 4 - R13
12:00, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30

DRAGON BALL EVOLUTION - PG13
12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00

17 AGAIN - PG13
1:10, 3:30, 5:50, 8:00, 10:00

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE - PG13
12:00, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30

I2 - PG13
12:00, 2:15, 3:45, 6:00, 10:00

CRANK 2 - R13
12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

MOVIES & SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

MTRCB PG-13
DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 17 AGAIN PG-13
2:15, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10

2 DRAGON BALL PG-13
12:40, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 8:50

3 FAST & THE FURIOUS PG-13
1:40, 4:20, 7:00, 9:40

4 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE PG-13
1:40, 4:20, 7:00, 9:40

T2 PG-13
12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30

Free Chinese Painting Workshop (2 sessions)
To be conducted by the Confucius Institute of the Ateneo de Manila University
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THEATRE-MALL
1 2
PROMENADE
3 4 5
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IN CONNECTICUT
BASED ON TRUE EVENTS
Warning: NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART
POSSESSION STARTS APRIL 22

THE TRANSPORTER IS BACK!
JASON STATHAM
CRANK
HIGH VOLTAGE
MTRCB R-13
NOW PLAYING

Iranian filmmaker eyes RP co-prods

By Reynerd San Diego Jr.

THE FILM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF the Philippines (FDCP) had a roundtable discussion with Iranian filmmaker Reza Mirkarimi and cultural affiper Rena Asgari, during Cine Kita Film Week last month.

Mirkarimi is a writer/producer/director, whose films have been awarded prizes in the Cannes, Tokyo, Berlin, Nantes, Cairo and Montreal film festivals.

Asgari noted that the purpose of Just Film Week, and the Iranian-Filipino cultural exchange to promote it to foster greater understanding between the two countries.

"We are very aware of each other's cultures," Asgari explained. "It is not that Asian filmmakers can only meet and watch each others' films in European festivals."

Mirkarimi, former managing director of the Iranian House of Cinema, remembers watching a Filipino film on Tehran television.

Like Filipino films, Asgari pointed out, Iranian cinema usually global attention because "the topics are at once specific and universal."

He recalled that the Iranian revolution three decades ago ousted out "lies and violence" and allowed cinema films about social concerns, and family and children's issues, to flourish.

Incentives

"These stories belong to the world," Asgari said. He singled out Mirkarimi's film, 'As Simple As This,' which chronicles "a day in the life of an ordinary housewife who's often unnerved by the people around her." The movie won at the Moscow and Asiatico Film Festivals (Italy) festivals.

The Iranian government gives incentives to world-credited films via a 0% personal discount on TV ads and billboards. Good films are assured actual sales because the government buys tickets and distributors down to the public.

Mirkarimi and Asgari both saw a pressing need for greater cooperation among Asian countries, "to counteract the side effects of globalization."

They said time is ripes as co-productions with the Philippines, in the same way that Iranian film companies have co-produced with Hong Kong and Japan."

Shutting up . . .

From page G4

In the past few days, Boyle has been featured in a number of newspapers and appeared on TV promoting the show. Her fans include actors Dennis Trillo and husband Ashwin Bautista, who flagged the performance on Twitter, as well as Oprah Winfrey, who has invited Boyle to guest on her show.

"It has been surreal for me," Boyle told the AP. "I didn't realize this would be the response."

The youngest of nine children of a devout Roman Catholic family, she grew up in one of Scotland's most deprived areas.

As a child, Boyle had learning difficulties, struggled in school and was bullied by other kids.

Church choir

A love of singing, Boyle performed in church choirs and school plays and sought solace on the karaoke circuit in Blackburn and the country areas of Bathgate. She said her mother, Bridget, encouraged her to enter "Britain's Got Talent"—first it turn only after her death that she plucked up the courage to do it.

Boyle's millions of fans cannot even wait to see whether she makes it through the semi-finals of the show.

In Blackburn, her neighbors are rooting for her. "We're very proud of her," said Angela Mckenzie, 22. "But we need another record why she didn't at least put a crush through her hair before she went on TV."

AP

So, for real quality shows, catch the limelight at OnStage Greenbelt!

GREENBELT

Multimillion TV show in limbo

SHOWBIZ411

A network insider tweets: ABS-CBN spent P27 million on a drama show that's been in the can for months.

The insider says the show was dogged with all sorts of problems from Day One: A directorial issue cast members have dropped out and the show is at a standstill.

Is it true?

Load Star was once heard saying, "This show feels like a life sentence."

If the rumored P27-M price tag is accurate, the network could've produced 15 digital movies, or P2M per!

Chair-busting girth

In a recent public event, Maja Salvador had an embarrassing encounter with an arm chair.

As MS got up from the seat, the arm rest came off (snapped like cardboard) seemingly on account of MS's bulging tummy.

Uh-oh, time to diet.

Material lush

Material Girls are so last season. Most die-serious breed of Material lushes:

Montes Model is a regular in chain-solarium for his macho posturing. Turns out, MM has a softer side, as evasion companion to sick guys.

A blogger insists MM swarmed with Wealthy Guy to a "gated community" in Orange County, and that MM lured the "high life" to WG's kept boy in the US.

A new love

Is Glenn Gay depressed over his purported breakup with Denise Arroz? Is this the reason that GG is packing the kilo?

Not really. GG has allegedly found new romance in Budding (or is it healing?) Hagos.

There have been numerous sightings of GG and BG Glenn, they were spotted leaving a party together.

Out and about

Macho Actor has disappeared from the scene, but a Brutus mole sure has sliding the MRT.

Nothing scandalous about publ- ic annoucements, of course, but Mrs was wearing a body-hugging tank top, in pink!

Biggest loser

High-profile Plastic Surgeon loves bragging about having celebrity clients.

Unfortunately, LBFS can't claim credit for Major Star's liposuction procedure years ago because MS, as a paying customer, had demanded utmost secrecy.

In this case, LBFS is the biggest loser.

Diarsa or loud?

There's talk that although Mind- ay Bivera lost "Pamilinks," she won the role of "Diarsa."

According to the grapevine, it's a last-ditch effort to save Bivera after the less-than-stellar performance of "Ang Babaeng Hinugot sa Aking Tadyang."

But a GMA 7 rep asserts that there's still no confirmation about the ratings from the network's tra- nsactions division.

Ex to the rescue

Former Sexy Actress appears to be in a none-too-subtle meltdown. A spy tells us that FSA ordered grocery items for distribution to the poor in the name of a national organization of local leaders.

The goods were dispatched last Christmas to the intended recipients, yes, but the supplier was never paid. Hello Glenn Wood had advanced a check as guarantor (local opp., diber friend) a.) Nasa FSA re- hawes to talk to CJ.

Someone suggested that CJ ask FSBs rich and generous Ka Pinti- tan's help in collecting the payment. KP reportedly promised he would settle the bill, as soon as FSA confirms the story to him. Whoa. Does KP's current actress- partner know?

Happy birthdays!

Sinners Cruz (last April 2, Saturday Santos last April 4, Kristo Rasalio on April 27; Mr. Sotto on April 28).

Elsewhere in the show biz fr- aternity:

Today: Ashley Judd is 41, James Franco is 31, Kate Hudson is 30, Hayden Christensen is 28.

Tomorrow: Ryan O'Neal is 66, Jessica Lange is 60.

April 21: Tony Danza is 58, Sadie MacDowell is 33, James McEvoy is 30. AP

Top of the tabloids

The top show biz stories in PEP tabloid Monday this week. (And why we are scared, if we are re- vered.)

•Angelica Panganiban, telling us where the n'Alberto Concepcion.

(Di bale, maraw naman siguro...)

•Pinky Pinzaal, hindi na sasali (Aww!)

•Glenda de Guzman, di kayang magpalista ng books. (Ah! Also...?)

•Ai Ai de las Alas, showing no impulsion at Bob Arguelles' (Really?)

•Bro. Eduardo ng Iglesia worth P500,000. (Really?)

•Brenda Iwasa, may hope na nemang dyowa, (But we just met the last one!)

•Marina Magalawan, John Prats magpakasal after 30 years. (That's wrong way to a bit.)

•Sexbomb nagsipagtrending (2K). (And we are surprised be- cause...?)

•Engagement ring ang regalo ni Jade Blancaflor kay Angel Locsin? (Eh! he still for that's what it meant?)

•Okay lang kay Luis na 'mas- tahin' si Angel? (Maybe not.)

•Malaki ang Goods ni Aga Mu- ghal—Luis. (Grave!)

•Marvin Agustin, magsasabog muddslide. (Storm! he was put up with.)

•Hawaiian Bandi, pilit dito sa GMA? (Strong word, Bob.)

•Sunshine at Finlay Webb, of Isla Ay Isla Hanamon? (Tsolain.)

•Details, impregnant dito or Ja- son Webb. (That's not the whole family.)

•Gamu se ipan ni Aubrey Miles nisiy misanya. (Mechanic.)

•Melissa Riches il Hott Fessor lang ang peste kong babaliner (Fun!)

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PG-13

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17 AGAIN

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ENTERTAINMENT

FRIENDLY COMPETITION
The last Geeta Cup—the celebrity golf tournament founded in 1999 by Richard Gomez for photo with wife Lucy Torres)—was held seven years ago. Now it's back with a "grand reunion" at Fairways & Bluewaters in Boracay from April 23-25. The network war is likely to be set aside in favor of friendly competition among some of the country's biggest stars. Events include water sports and a beach cleanup.

Animation tilt seeks good Pinoy stories

By Marinel R. Cruz

PINOY ANIMATION FILMMAKERS HAVE caught worldwide attention for their technical skills and style. The only thing lacking in their works is a good story.

"Engaging tales are essential"

"Technical thing is the weakest element in our animation productions. An engaging story is very important. A concept can help find good material," said Ricky Orellana, himself an animator and currently academic head of the Mowelfund Film Institute.

Because Entertainment sought Orellana's opinion on the first underwater flash

ANIMATION, A2

'AI' judges spare Matt

By Nestor M. Ecarma

'AMERICAN IDOL' JUDGES WERE UNANIMOUS in saving finalist Matt Giraud, who garnered the lowest votes during Thursday's elimination.

Giraud performed Bryan Adams' "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman?" during the show's movie-theme night. The song is from the Johnny Depp starrer, "Don Juan DeMarco."

It was not the first time the 23-year-old piano player from Michigan was spared from elimination. Giraud got the least during the Top 36 round, but the judges brought him back into the fold via the Wild Card round.

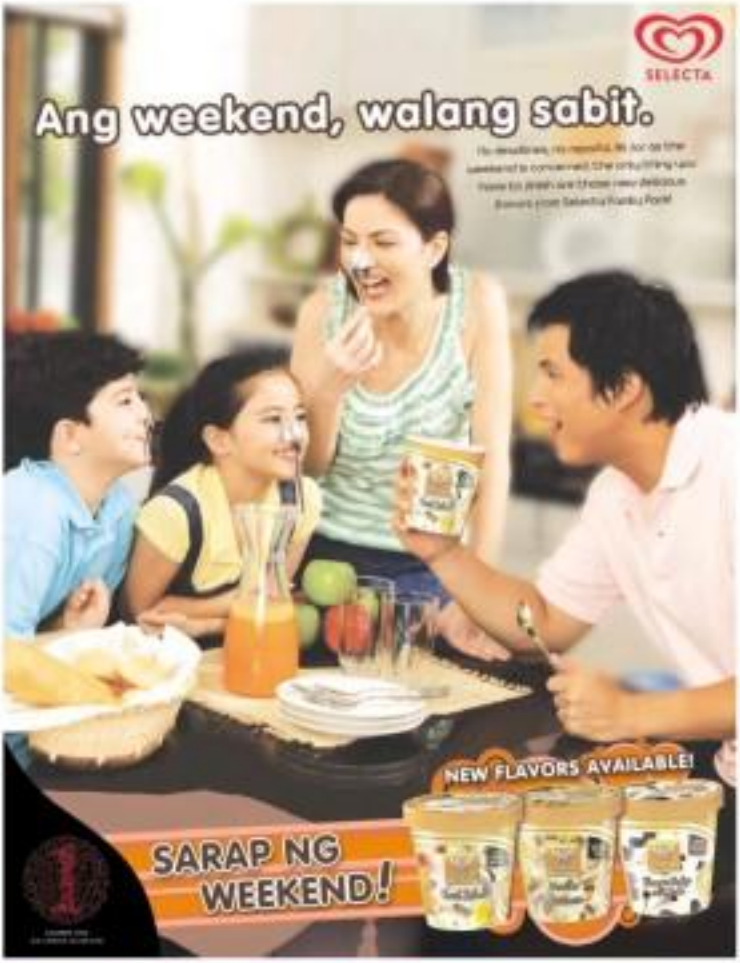
Three "Idol" auditions before this week's elimination were lost: Lucky Michael Sarver, Megan Joy Corkrey and last week's runoff Scott Macintyre failed to impress the judges as deserving of one last try. The judges' vote paves it a one-time-only privilege.

Goodbye, all-rig

Michael Sarver, who shared the hottest two spotlight with Kloss

A4 TV

MATT Giraud



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GALLERIA

1 FAST and FURIOUS 4
2 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
3 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
4 FRIDAY the 13TH
5 T2
6 KNOWING
7 SEVENTEEN AGAIN
8 QUEEN RAQUELA
9 MONSTERS vs. ALIENS
10 CRANK 2

ERMITA

1 SEVENTEEN AGAIN
2 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
3 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
4 FAST & FURIOUS 2
5 T2
6 MONSTERS vs. ALIENS
7 FRIDAY the 13TH
8 CRANK 2

METRO EAST

1 T2
2 FRIDAY the 13TH
3 FAST & FURIOUS
4 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
5 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
6 CRANK 2
7 MONSTERS vs. ALIENS
8 SEVENTEEN AGAIN

NOVALICHES

1 FAST & FURIOUS 4
2 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
3 FRIDAY the 13TH
4 T2

PIONEER

1 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
2 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
3 T2
4 FRIDAY the 13TH

STA. ROSA

1 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
2 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
3 KNOWING
4 T2

LIPA

1 THE SECRET OF MOONACRE
2 T2
3 CRANK 2
4 T2 ROUNDS

DASMARIÑAS

1 T2
2 CRANK 2
3 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
4 FRIDAY the 13TH

IMUS

1 FRIDAY the 13TH
2 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
3 FAST & FURIOUS 4
4 T2
5 SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

ANGELES

1 FAST & FURIOUS 4
2 T2
3 FRIDAY the 13TH
4 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION

STARMILLS

1 KNOWING
2 T2
3 FRIDAY the 13TH
4 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
5 FAST & FURIOUS 4
6 THEY WAIT

BACOLOD

1 FRIDAY the 13TH
2 T2
3 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
4 THE UNBORN
5 KNOWING
6 THE SECRET OF MOONACRE

ILOILO

1 DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION
2 T2
3 FRIDAY the 13TH
4 THE UNBORN
5 KNOWING
6 MONSTERS vs. ALIENS

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fiction scriptwriting contest penned by the Animation Council of the Philippines Inc. (ACPI) and the University Research Consortium of the Philippines.

Flash fiction?

Mark Fetilino is defined as "a very short story that ranges from 100 to 1,000 words, which can be written or read in one sitting."

Orellana is the founder of Animagination, a network of local independent animators, and also the head of Monolitoff's animation program.

Screen playwright and fellow animator Mendoza Elbin Rasco shares Orellana's views. "We've got the digital knowhow. We've got ideas ... I hope we can come up with engaging Pinoy content," said Rasco, who created the animated short film "Ferdie in the Bath" and "Tatak Sa Kalsada ng Pulbos."

Pinoy content

Rasco also wrote and co-directed the independent film "Solid" and "Walang Hanggang Paalam" with Paolo Villaluna.

ACPI executive director Mikhail Rito Lim said the scriptwriting contest aims to produce more original Filipino content in animation. The winners will be announced and awarded on June 27. Top winner will get P15,000, second prize, P7,000, and third prize, P5,000. Entries must be submitted on or before May 15.

Too small

Visual artist and movie filmmaker Pablo Baltag-ong, a jury in last year's Animatikan-yan Animation Film Festival, said he hopes the contest would reinforce local efforts in schools with animation courses to aim after scriptwriting workshops.

"Content was one of the main problems found by Animatikan-yan," Baltag-ong noted. "It's something that animation should really work on so that their efforts would not be put to waste. However, I find the cash prize for this contest too small. I hope the writers would get additional promotion when their materials are finally turned into a full-length production."

Contest themes

Entries must be good for a five-minute story (one-page of 8 to 10 pages). Lim said full stories must explore one or a combination of three themes: celebration of Filipino freedom from colonization, recognition of the Filipino's cultural diversity, promotion of local heritage, traditions and way of life.

For more questions, visit the ACPI website, www.animationcouncil.org.

CHILI HONOREES were led by Iggy Manlapaz and Mike Enriquez (first and second from L) and Mel Tiangco (second from R).

ANGEL Guerrero, Adobo editor

Ad mag cites 2 networks

ADOBO, THE FILIPINO AMERICAN Advertising and Brand Communications magazine, honored winners of the 2009 New York Festivals' International Television Programming and Promotion during its fifteenth third anniversary party at Whitepaper on Pasong Tamo, Makati.

Two Philippine TV networks and one religious charity received gold awards at the prestigious New York Festivals.

ABS-CBN received two gold medals, a silver, two bronzes and several finalist awards. GMA-7 received one gold, three silver and also several finalist awards. The remaining gold and silver went to the Heroes of Adobe Catholic Family Media Group.

Winners received their honors were ABS-CBN's Kristine Sanchez, GMA's Mike Enriquez, Mel Tiangco and Iggy Manlapaz, QTV's Rhea Santos and representatives of the Heroes of Adobe Family Catholic Media Group.

The event was hosted by advertising creative director Lilli Reyes, actress Cherie Gil and Adobo magazine editor in chief Angel Guerrero.

Face to face with 'The Soloist'

Joey Albert, Stephanie Reese and Pete Avendaño guest in historic concert

NETWORKS. Juilliard prodigy who became a homeless man, whose story inspired a book and a movie.

LOS ANGELES—WE RECENTLY came face to face with Nathaniel Ayers, who inspired the Los Angeles Times' Steve Lopez to write stories about his friendship with the gifted musician, who was homeless at the time. Steve's columns on Nathaniel were compiled into a book—into a movie, "The Soloist," starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jamie Foxx.

Steve discovered that Nathaniel was a prodigy at Juilliard until schizophrenia silenced his promising future. Having just seen the movie and spoken to Robert and Jamie about it, we seized the chance to see Nathaniel when an en-

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Robert V. Arquiza

tire friend joined some But the musician was in the garden of the Walt Disney Concert Hall auditorium LA. Coincidentally, we visited the set of "The Soloist" inside the Hall last year.

We spotted Nathaniel seated on a white chair and playing out a shiny cello from a case full of handwritten sounds. In big letters was the name of Dan Issenman Stead, "Legato." He started playing and soon he was lost in his music, eyes closed.

Most Sunday afternoons passers-by/fans double take as they passed the man wearing a red hat, bangs folded and locks, and recognized him as "The Soloist." They took his pictures and lingered as Nathaniel, who is played by Jamie in the film, kept playing, unmindful of the attention.

In our talk with him, Nathaniel (colloquially referred as "Mr. Lopez" and "My Mr. Mr. Mr.") let loose comments in bullet. He's a big fan of Jamie Foxx's acting, including Jamie's fame for Stella Ike 1 to 5. Music which was used prominently in the film. It gave us goose bumps. With a cool breeze swirling through the magnificent Frank Gehry steel structure that frames over the garden as Nathaniel played, deep into the music of Bach, it was hard to leave.

Jamie earlier told us that he occasionally checks on Nathaniel.

Historic debut

Still on music, as we reported yesterday, the Filipino-American Symphony Orchestra (Faso) is poised to make its historic debut at the San Filipino extraordinary orchestra outside the Philippines on May 17 in Beverly Hills.

Honored to be featured as guest artists who will perform with the pioneering orchestra are Joey Albert, Stephanie Reese and Pete Avendaño.

"I am very excited," says Stephanie, 10/14-based singer/songwriter/actress/model for the first time with the orchestra. Hearing young Filipino voices of whom have never been to the Philippines, play Filipino compositions and enjoying it, is something that I will never forget."

The tenor who played the lead role Enrico in the Filipino opera "Bahia si Isaraia" or the La Mirada Theater, spoke appreciatively of Faso, a University of the Philippines alumnus who played with the Manila Symphony Orchestra and the Manila Chamber Orchestra before he immigrated to the US. "Bob loves his Filipino roots," Pete volunteered. "When I first met him, I kept speaking to him in English. When he suddenly spoke in Tagalog, I was really surprised. Later, he played the flute on my 'Bandilaan' album."

Pete, based in LA like Stephanie, is one of the founding members of the UST Singers Alumni in Asunion and the Philippine Chamber Singers of Los Angeles. He revealed his numbers in the collection concert on the evening of May 17: "I will perform two selections, 'Sa Ugoy ng Duyan' by the late National Artist Lucio San Pedro and a contemporary piece entitled 'Isang Kundiman,' a song written for OPM Clemencia Filipino Weekend by Grey de Leon and arranged for orchestra by Stacie very own Kendo Cadiz. I will also sing 'The Prayer' and 'Ang Dapat Ko' with Joey and Stephanie."

For inquiries about the concert, e-mail faso@musicpartners.com.

JOEY Albert

PETE Avendaño

STEPHANIE Reese

'Al' judges . . .

From page H3

Ground before he was eliminated, said he wasn't going back to the ring.

"I don't think it would be a great idea to get out there and not be available for the tour," the 28-year-old chef from Arizona said in an interview arranged by Star Idol, which airs the program in the Philippines.

Survivor will join the "American Idols Live!" tour that starts in July, having been among the Top Ten finalists.

"I like the R&B pop style of Jamie Underwood, and it's fun a lot to do with the way I write," said Survivor, who plans to write songs for his album. "I also like Gavin DeGraw, some of that soulful rock," he replied when asked what his album would be like.

Quirky Corkery

Allen Answer, a new national single music Megan Joy Corkery who was new tenor.

The 23-year-old's "Idol" journey ended with the song "Turn the Lights Down Low" by Bob Marley, which novelist judge Simon Cowell called "boring, indulgent and monotonous."

"I love birds and bird noises. I decided that if I'm going out, I'm going out with a bang. And I'm just going to be myself. I flew the whole time ... This always just making noises," Megan Joy said during her exit interview with the world's press, including the bosses, at-tes arranged by Star Idol.

Asked how she felt when Cowell said the judges didn't rate enough to consider keeping her in the competition, the blonde singer said, "I was thinking, did what I say really upset them that much?" Before her farewell song, she also said, "I don't care."

On the other hand, could it be because of those funny noises? Megan quipped, "I can't help it. I would say to people who hate them, 'Eco-bad. Close your eyes.'"

Already saved

Idol balladeer Scott Mackeyev almost had that same moment because was out of the four judges convinced saving him.

"I was thrilled to know that it was a split decision—it wasn't unanimous," the 23-year-old singer/piano player said. "It's a great time for me to leave, because now I get to focus on my life and career."

Scott, whose Paula Abdul comcended for being "an inspiration to young" and he will review his catalog of original songs and pull out some pieces that he feels would make an album, it could when he gets an offer to do one.

"What you'll see from me in the coming months is an album like Gavin DeGraw, Jason Mraz, Vanessa Carlton, and Mark Schultz, who's a country artist as well. I try to straddle that line between pop, rock, country and adult contemporary."

Next Sat. Idol Season 8 airs this Wednesday and Thursday, 8 p.m. on Star World with some night replays at 9 and 11 p.m.

MICHAEL Sarver

MEGAN Joy Corkery

SCOTT Mackeyev